THE CROSS AT THE FRONT

THOMAS TIPLADY

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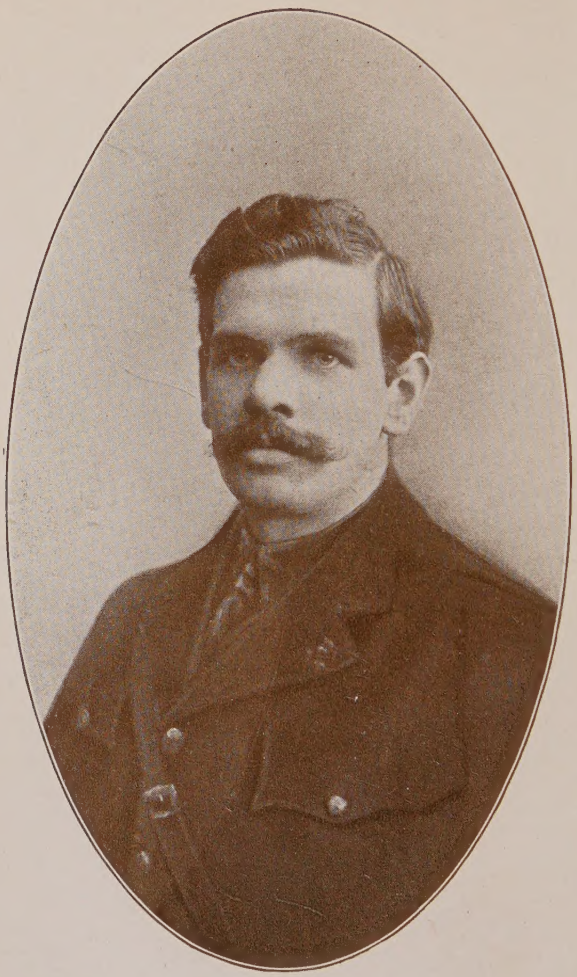

yours faithfully
Thomas Tipladdy

The Cross at the Front

Fragments from the Trenches

BY

THOMAS TIPLADY

Chaplain to the Forces

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DEDICATED

with gratitude and admiration to the officers and men of the gallant 56th Division of London Territorials, who, with a courage unsurpassed in history, attacked the strong position of Gommècourt in the Battle of July the First, and for several hours held the third line of German trenches, accomplishing what Mr. Beach Thomas described as '*The* Feat of the Battle,' and thereby helping their brave comrades farther south to break through on a wide front—a front to which, some weeks later, the Division was itself transferred, and had the great but dearly bought honour of taking part in the attacks culminating in the capture of Combles.

PREFACE

THE letters on life and thought at the Front contained in this volume were all written in tents and billets within range, or sound, of the guns. They were written quickly in odd moments and at the bidding of passing impulses. Under such circumstances literary finish was impossible, but it is hoped that they have captured something of the freshness of feeling which one has while passing through unusual experiences, and which is apt to evaporate with the lapse of time. I have attempted no battle picture nor description of military operations, well knowing that such things are beyond me. I have merely gathered up some of the fragments that remained—fragments which might have been lost if not picked up at once. These I have attempted to sketch for the benefit of those at home. I trust they will reveal something of the spirit in which our soldiers lived and fought, suffered and died.

THOMAS TIPLADY.

B. E. F., FRANCE.

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I

THE LOST CHORD

LAST night I cycled into the neighbouring village to make inquiries about a lad who had perished in the fighting. As I drew near the church I heard sounds of music floating out through the shattered windows. If a seraph had stood in the streets of the village and sung heavenly songs to us, he could hardly have caused greater surprise to the occasional passers-by. The village lies forsaken. Every house is in ruins, or bears the marks of shells. There, at the cross-roads, where the sentry stands, a shell burst a few weeks ago. The soldier on duty felt no pain and needed no burial. Now, on the same spot, stood another soldier wistfully listening to the music of the church. The civilians have fled, and taken their belongings with them. A stranger race—an aforetime enemy—guards for them their land. The heroic breed is not dead, and in that youthful sentry is seen the England of a thousand years. I blessed him as I passed him, for in him I saw all the undimmed and undying glory of the race.

I placed my bicycle against the church wall, and sought the back entrance. The right-hand corner of the priest's garden wall had been blown away. The damaged archway had been propped up with a pole, and the path was blocked by a large shell-crater. The door of the vestry was off its hinges, and the floor was littered with books, vestments, and débris. Stepping over obstructions, I passed into the chancel. What a sight! A shell had been hurled through the centre of the wall immediately above the altar. The wall was two and a half feet thick, but it had broken before the invader like brown paper. A hole two yards wide gaped like a wound. The picture above the altar had been blown into a thousand fragments, and these were lying about the floor and window-sills. The altar, with its ornaments, lay crushed beneath a mass of masonry. The windows and the communion-rail were shattered to pieces and scattered far and wide. A lump of stone had been carried from above the altar into the pulpit. A still larger stone had been hurled to the other end of the church and lay in the central aisle. It seemed the work of some mad giant—some Samson insane with sorrow for the loss of his eyes. Stones had smashed through the backs of the movable pews and, with bits of the communion-rail, strewed the floor and

the seats. Plaster from the ceiling, fragments from the lamps, and stained glass from the windows crunched under my feet. I felt as guilty as if I were treading on lilies. I understood Jeremiah's tears. Chairs lay on the floor overturned, like cripples, and no one lifted them. The unhinged side-door leaned helplessly against the wall. It was a scene of desolation —a holy place desecrated by the dance of devils. Yet, looking down from a picture on the wall was the sweet face of the Virgin. Straining to her breast her beautiful Babe, she seemed to be shielding Him from the horrible happenings about Him. But the figure of the suffering Saviour nailed against the wall on the opposite side showed how impotent even a mother's love may be.

Out from the soul of the organ came a chord sweet as the fragrance of violets at the unsealing of a maiden's letter, and 'dear as remembered kisses after death.' It was the Lost Chord of Germany. All unconsciously the English lad at the French organ was calling up the spirit of old Germany to witness the havoc of new Germany in the temple of the God it has ceased to worship.

At the peril of his life he was touching those ivory keys. Straight before him gaped the great hole above the altar. Yet he played on.

A few days before he had leapt over the parapet amid a murderous fire, and, armed with bomb and bayonet, had sought the evil heart of a race that has become the disgrace and terror of mankind. But now the War was forgotten. He was back in the old days, and he heard not the sound of the guns. Peace wrapped him round as with a phalanx of angels' wings. By the incantation of his music he had called up the soul of old Germany as in the ancient days the Witch of Endor called back the soul of the sad-eyed Samuel. It sang of the shame and sorrow brought upon it by its children. 'Hear My Prayer' trembled upon the air as from a soul in pain. Crushed beneath the iron heel of the Prussian, like a daisy beneath the hoof of a stamping war-steed, the ancient spirit of Germany cried for deliverance. The Hymn of Hate deafens in the streets which once echoed to the sacred melodies of young Luther. The grieved spirit of Mendelssohn turns away from the impotent churches of his own land, as Paul turned away from the synagogues of his countrymen. Passing over the desolation of No Man's Land, he enters a ruined shrine and finds at the organ one with whom he may commune, and together the German musician and the English soldier pray for the return to the Fatherland of the gospel that makes men great.

'Hear My Prayer.' Will God hear, and send a new Luther to save Germany from the new tyrant and the new superstition? Or will He let the nation perish in its sins?

The prayer of Mendelssohn died away into silence, and a message of comfort floated through the ruined church. 'O rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. O rest in the Lord.' It was a song of hope to the broken-hearted nations which have been swept into the vortex of this world-tragedy. It floated out through the shattered windows, and I saw a soldier quietly listening without. Oh that the bereaved and anxious might hear it, and rest in the Lord! The priest of the church was away in the trenches, but God had sent to us from heaven a prophet of the old and better Germany. The voice of Mendelssohn grew still, and there came to us the voices of English men and English women sweetly singing of the faith that had made light for them the valley of the shadow of death, and bidding us be of good courage. They had sung the hymn on the sinking deck of the *Titanic*—and they were singing it still:

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,

Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

'Though like the wanderer,' the lad could not be silent. He lifted up his voice and sang with the heavenly visitants. Then came the sound of other voices. They were from over the sundering sea. Under their influence we forgot the ruined church. We were home again. The melody, 'I hear you calling me,' passed out through the broken windows and wafted our spirits over the waters as on the wings of angels.

'It's enough to break a man's heart, isn't it, sir?' said a soldier who had just entered the chancel, and was looking at the ruins. From the soul of the organ came the answer:

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

There was one sanctuary left unscarred; one Rock that towered above the surging floods of hate and lust; and the lad at the organ had found it.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy Judgment Throne,
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

He was a simple soldier—a private in the Rangers—who a few days before had seen hundreds of his comrades fall at his side as he charged through a triple curtain of fire, and he was playing, from memory, the songs that soothed his spirit. He was holding companionship with the truths by which men live, and for which men die. And he brought from the soul of the organ the chord which modern Germany has lost, and which no nation can lose and live. The German dead on the slopes around are the silent witnesses.

II

LILIES AND FORGET-ME-NOTS

IT was Sunday, but here everything happens on Sunday, and no one knows why. It just is so. After tea I had returned to my billet— a crazy attic at an *estaminet*. On the bed I found a card-board box with crushed-in sides. It had come by post, and it filled the little room with the fragrance of flowers. On opening it I found a black-bordered letter lying amid lilies and forget-me-nots. The letter was from a broken-hearted mother in London, and the flowers were for a grave at Ypres. She wanted me to put the flowers on her boy's grave, for it was his twenty-first birthday.

How I hated the War when I saw the flowers and the letter! If the monster would but discriminate! If it took the old and left the young, or if it slew the bad and spared the good, something might be said for it. But it does not even look into the eyes it is closing for ever. It is a soulless machine. It knows not whom it strikes, and cares not. The shell that I hear cracking as I write may be slaying a mother's

only son and support, or it may be putting an end to a life of crime. It does not know. The War is like a plough running amuck in a field of daisies. Here was a lad of twenty, and his fate was the fate of the daisy in the path of a plough. His mother sent flowers for his grave.

In lilies and forget-me-nots
A woman's love is writ;
And to the soil that wraps her son
A mother's heart is knit.

Flowers for his twenty-first birthday! How often she had dreamed of the feast she was to give him! And even the flowers will not be his. The regiment had moved from Flanders, and now was deep in France. At 6.30, in the corner of a field behind my billet, I was conducting divine worship, and I told his old comrades the story of the flowers. Then I drew out my hymn-book and gave out, verse by verse, 'For all the saints.' The worshipful voices of his comrades were the equivalents of lilies and forget-me-nots. It was an impressive moment, for our minds were with the sleepers at Ypres.

Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress, and their Might;
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true Light.
Alleluia!

Then thoughts of the immediate future followed fast, and we prayed for ourselves:

> O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
> Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
> And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
> Alleluia !

The glory of the dying sun gilded with its splendour the otherwise leaden clouds of the western sky, and we sang:

> The golden evening brightens in the west,
> Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest;
> Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest !
> Alleluia !

But what should I do with the flowers? Like the water from the well of Bethlehem which David poured out before the Lord, they were sacred. Two days before, I had visited a little cemetery where many a lad will sleep—not with his fathers, but with his comrades. There were five graves, and none was a week old. The lads who were lying there were from Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and far-away Somerset. All had died of wounds. Could I, even in the agony of death, have shown them English lilies and forget-me-nots their eyes would have shone with joy and tears. I would take to them the flowers meant for the grave at Ypres.

Next morning, therefore, I cycled into the village, and down the high street. Then I turned into a sweet little country lane. The Tommies had named it 'Lovers' Lane,' and painted the words on a small board at the turning. It is not a lovers' lane, for there are no lovers. All have gone to the War. But Tommy knew what it ought to be, and it brought to him happy memories from over the sea. Had he not entered France singing 'It's a long, long way to . . . but my heart's right there'? The title 'Lovers' Lane' was not a joke of Tommy's, any more than the chorus of 'Tipperary' was the light song some dull people imagined. There was more of tears than laughter in it. The sackcloth next the skin was visible through the clown's gay trappings. For if the soldier and traveller dreams more of one thing than another it is of some lovers' lane and some little cottage in Tipperary, or otherwhere. He leaves the dear place to do his duty, and marches away with a smile on his face, but he leaves his heart behind him. His heart is 'right there.' Tommy always speaks of deep things with the half-revealing, half-concealing reticence of poetry. Has a terrible shell fallen in his trench? It is a 'Jack Johnson'—a lump of brutality with smiles in it. Has his comrade been killed? He has 'gone West.'

I went down Tommy's 'Lovers' Lane,' and I came to what every lover comes to, sooner or later. I came to a cemetery. There the lads lay, and somewhere else, equally hidden from view, are women's hearts breaking. Is it only *English* hearts that break? Nay, on the left-hand side, divided only by the road made by human intercourse, was a *French* cemetery. Is it only the lovers of soldiers who have their hearts broken? Nay, for the French cemetery was the last resting-place of civilians. Tommy is right. 'Lovers' Lane' is a sweet road, 'dewy with nature's tear-drops'; but on this side and on that side is a cemetery, and neither soldier nor civilian, English nor French, may tread that enchanted lane without coming to the place of tears and the sundering of sweet fellowships. The toll-bar of the road is not at the entrance, but at the end. The lover pays with pain, but without repentance, for

> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.

I left my bicycle at the gate and entered the enclosure. I entered in the name of mothers and wives and sweethearts. When I have gone, and the guns have gone, they will come themselves, and the place will be hallowed by their presence. The graves were neat and smooth,

and a cross—the sacred symbol of suffering and sacrifice—stood at the head of each, and recorded the soldier's name and nobleness. He was lying there 'for his King and Country.' I laid a lily, all white and gold, on each bed, and thanked God that there was no red in a lily. White for purity of his patriotism; gold for his triumph over fear, and selfishness, and death. But no red, for the bitterness of war was past. Then I dug a few forget-me-not roots into the mould of each grave, that they may witness to the unforgetting love which will guard the sacred dead. As I dug them in I prayed that God would lead some one with English flowers to the grave at Ypres, that he who had missed his mother's flowers might not be left without fair tokens of remembrance.

My work done, I bade good-bye alike to lads and lilies, and stepped once more into 'Lovers' Lane.'

III

THE KITTEN IN THE CRATER

I CANNOT get it out of my mind—that kitten in the crater. I had just come up with my men who had been in another part of the line, and a Comrade of the Cross was showing me the lay of the land. We passed the battered-down church from which soldiers were carting bricks to build incinerators—a good use of bricks from what had been a moral incinerator—and we entered the communication-trench from the village street. After a time we reached a support-trench, and looking over the parapet we could see our own front line, No Man's Land, the German trenches, and the village beyond, with the church pointing with unheeded finger to heaven. Then we came to some forsaken dugouts. They had been rendered untenable by the violence of shell-fire. The roofs were battered in, and the débris lay scattered about. 'Look,' said my comrade, and I looked. There, in a crater made by a large shell, was a pretty little kitten.

If anything speaks of home it is a kitten. It

carries our memory back to the blazing fire and the cat sleeping within the fender. Yet here are thousands of lads who have not been home for months, and here are poor dug-outs—the crudest possible imitations of homes—that have been battered in. Day and night these soldiers dream of home. There is not a man in the army who dare sing 'Home, Sweet Home'; and not one who dare play it on a gramophone. The men could not stand it, and no one dare try them with it. Home is ever in their thoughts. But when they speak of it they veil the depth of their feelings by calling it 'Blighty.' When a soldier gets his leave-warrant, whether he be old or young, officer or private, he behaves exactly like a schoolboy who has got a month's holiday. His joy bubbles over. In a trench a man is as much out of place as a kitten in a crater, and as surely will he leave the trench for the fireside. The home will triumph over the trench.

The crater belongs to war; the kitten to peace. The one speaks of death; the other of life. And it is life that will triumph and death that will be buried. As I entered the village that day I saw some gunners fly for their lives, for the German guns had located their battery. Shell after shell I watched as it fell near the guns and sent up its cloud of smoke and dust.

And yet over the shells as they hurtled through the air were two skylarks singing as though their throats would burst with song. They were teaching the same lesson as the kitten in the crater.

When I look upon the horrors of war I do not despair, for in the toad's head there is ever to be found a precious jewel. Who that has seen it can ever forget the brave yet anxious smile of a lad as he stands listening to the shells passing over his head and falling a little beyond him? Who that has seen a platoon entering a communication-trench, and shouting good-bye to the watching comrades, can ever forget it? The courage and cheerfulness of the men, their patience and self-denial, their devotion to the wounded and sick, are jewels which shine like stars in the black night of war, and make us almost love the night which reveals them to us. War is a horrible crater, but within it is the sweet kitten of human nobleness.

On my way home on leave I put up for the night at a casualty clearing-station. There I saw a horrible sight that did not seem horrible. A gunner had alone, and by the skin of his teeth, survived the destruction of his battery. In body he was but the fragment of a man, and was a sad sight, but in spirit he was ennobling. A comrade was shaving him, and it was a mov-

ing sight to see the tenderness with which he did it. The cheerfulness and courage of the wounded man were superb. They made what might have been sordid, sublime. They were the kitten in the crater. 'I think,' said my comrade to one of the nurses, 'that his love for his sweetheart has pulled him through.' 'I don't,' replied the nurse. 'You think his nurse pulled him through?' he asked. 'Yes,' she replied; 'he was brought in unconscious, and remained so for two or three days, and his nurse held on to him night and day till she got him on the road to recovery. It wasn't his sweetheart but his nurse who saved him!' The speaker was pale and worn. She, too, had had many a wrestle with death for the life of a stranger lad. She is like the daisy I plucked near the ruined dug-outs and carried home. The guns cannot destroy her. She springs up in every war. We find her here as surely as our grandfathers found her in the Crimea. War is horrible, but there is a kitten in the crater and a woman in the hospital, and the kitten and the woman speak of home and love and gentleness. The love which brought the kitten to the crater and the woman to the hospital is the love that will conquer hate and put an end to war.

IV

'ABIDE WITH ME'

IT was Thursday evening, in a little village behind the line, and the hour we had chosen for worship. Stepping off the road that threaded its way through the cluster of farmhouses, we passed through a field, in which some of our comrades were playing at football, and entered the field beyond. There we found a quiet corner where the trees stood round us like to the pillars in the aisles of our churches at home. There were about fifteen of us. Some were in the R.A.M.C., and had just come out. The others were in an infantry regiment which had served twelve months in Flanders, and had been but recently transferred to France. Quietly they formed themselves into a semi-circle round me, and I asked them what they would like to sing.

'No. 52.'

'That will do nicely,' I said. 'Will you please give it out?'

> At even ere the sun was set,
> The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;

O in what divers pains they met!
O with what joy they went away!

Once more 'tis eventide, and we,
Oppressed with various ills, draw near;
What if Thy form we cannot see?
We know and feel that Thou art here.

The evening was quite still. The voices of the men playing at football sounded sweetly distant, and the sound of the guns broke upon our ears like that thud of incoming waves falling on the sea-shore. We lifted up our voices and sang, with the subdued note of the birds in the neighboring hedges. To him who has only sung this hymn in a church much of its beauty must of necessity be hidden. It is revealed only in the light of the setting sun. The men were facing the Golden West. The pomp of the dying day lay upon the rustling leaves of the trees and upon the grass at our feet. It lit up with beauty the faces of the men as they sang. Soon it would be gone, and the shadows would wrap us round as with a mantle. We should feel the isolation of darkness, that which makes children afraid. A sense of loneliness would creep over us, and the coldness of nature would grip us.

'We would see Jesus'—the Light that never fails. And our hearts cried out to Him, 'Abide with us, for the day is far spent.'

Thy touch hath still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all.

Then we bowed our heads, and I asked one or two of the men to lead in prayer—not knowing which would respond, but leaving them to the Spirit's promptings. Quietly, naturally, and with humility, they lifted up their voices in prayer. Two prayed; three prayed; and I asked for more. It was so sweet to hear them that I could not bring myself to stop the music of their prayers. Five or six prayed; then came a silence as thrilling as speech, and, after it, we joined in the Lord's Prayer. We knew that He who taught us the prayer was in the midst to hear it, and to present it to His Father and ours.

After the prayers, the men chose No. 14, with its fine opening line to each verse:

Fight the good fight with all thy might.
Run the straight race through God's good grace.
Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide.
Faint not, nor fear, His arms are near.

Then I read to them the 91st Psalm:

'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. . . . He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust.

His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. . . . For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands.'

A few weeks later many of the men were to see the arrow that flieth by day, for suddenly shells fell like thunder-bolts about their billets, killing and wounding many. They were also to feel the terror by night, for while out in front of their trenches, digging in darkness, the foe discovered their presence and searched their ranks with shot and shell. But the Wings were over the lads who had met for worship on that calm evening of which I write, and who, with faces lit by the setting sun, had listened to that psalm of confidence in God. They were saved from the arrow by day and the terror by night.

I asked them what they would sing next, and they chose No. 12:

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.
. . . . . .

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

Ah, me! We did not know the meaning of hynms before. When you are far from home, with the darkness gathering round you, and the guns booming in your ears, you see again the angel faces you have left behind you, and wonder if the dawn will ever break through, for you, the long night of war, and restore them to you. Unutterable longings come to you, and at such times you know the meanings of hymns. As we sang Newman's hymn, and prayed for light, 'kindly' light, we knew something of Newman's secret. We understood something of his feelings as, with the shadows gathering over him, he sat alone on the deck of a wandering ship, far from England and home.

After the hymn, I spoke to the men of the forward look to be seen on every page of the Bible. I showed them how, in all ages, God's people have been journeying 'towards the sunrising'; how they have always refused to be content with things as they are, or have been, and, urged by a divine discontent, have pressed on to a 'better country,' and a 'New Jerusalem,'

'whose Builder and Maker is God'; how they have sought the path that 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day,' and, refusing to believe in the finality of either darkness or twilight, have sought the pure light. A night of barbarism had overwhelmed the world, but it would yield to the daylight of love and peace.

'The day must dawn, and darksome night be past.' The land that was red with blood to-day would be red with roses to-morrow. A world for which the Son of God had died could not be lost, nor sink back into the abyss of barbarism out of which He had lifted it. Though humanity was being torn and cast upon the ground in the process, the devil *was* being cast out of the nations, and our children would not be thrown into the fire as we had been. Our feet were yet in the wasteful wilderness, but our eyes were towards the sunrising and the Land of Promise. And our feet would follow our eyes. So I spoke to the brave lads.

By now the night was on. We could scarcely see our books, but we turned to No. 51, and by the fast-failing light sang:

> Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
> The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
> When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
> Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

The lights along the Front were becoming visible, but the worshippers had seen Him who is invisible, and they were unafraid. The faith that was in them had found its expression:

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life and death, O Lord, abide with me.

After the blessing the men quietly separated and walked to their billets. They walked in twos and threes, speaking softly as they went. As they walked I stood and watched them, for there was One with them whose form was like unto the form of the Son of God. He *was* abiding with them.

V

THE WAYSIDE CALVARY

LAST Tuesday I had my first Communion Service out here in France. We could not get a room of any kind, so we held the service in the corner of a field behind some billets. I spread my mackintosh on the grass and it served for a table; I used the Communion service which was given me when I left the old country. Twelve men formed a semi-circle round me, and the evening shadows were gathering over us when I began to read the words, 'Dearly beloved in the Lord.' Then in the twilight the twelve came one by one and knelt upon a corner of the mackintosh and received the broken bread and outpoured wine. As we knelt together in Holy Communion we could hear the voices of men returning from a game of football in a neighbouring field. As they passed through an opening in the hedge near us, they lowered their voices and passed quietly on to their billets in the village. When each of the twelve soldiers had partaken, and returned to his place, I gave out, verse by verse,

by the help of an electric torch, ' When I survey the wondrous cross.' In the utter stillness of the fields we sang, and, although between the verses we could hear the low booming of distant guns, we rejoiced in the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. After the Benediction we went our several ways, but two of our lads walked with me to the crossroads. From there my way lay through a piece of open country for some two miles. The night was dark, and the wind wailed over the fields. On my right I could plainly see the flashes and flares that light up the battle-front at night. They held my eyes with a strange fascination as I took my solitary way. Suddenly I turned to a clump of trees on my left, and there saw what I had already seen by day—a tall, stone cross with a small bronze figure of Christ nailed upon it. There the cross stood in the gloom, with just sufficient light to show forth its solemn grandeur. Protestant though I am, when I looked at the fitful lights on the French front and then turned again to the cross, I could not forbear to lift my hand to Him in salute. I know now why it is that on the French roads you see representations of the Crucifixion rather than the Ascension. It is that this weary, war-stricken world needs assurance of God's love rather than of His power. There on the right were our sons being sacri-

ficed, but there on the left the representation of the sacrifice of God's Son. The men I had knelt with at the Sacrament had been twelve months in the trenches. They knew the meaning of those lights on my right, but they knew also the meaning of that cross on my left, and standing between the two they could say, 'God is love.'

VI

BEFORE AND AFTER THE BATTLE

WE knew the 'Big Push' was coming, but we did not know when. I therefore announced a service for Holy Communion to be held on the Monday evening. All day long the rain came down in torrents, and I watched it almost as anxiously as the people of old must have watched the beginning of the Deluge. We had no building, and the Lord's Supper was to be spread in a field. We were, therefore, dependent on the weather. Towards six o'clock the rain stopped. The field was sodden, but the men came to the service in larger numbers than I had ever seen. We had the same hymns and form of service as we should have had at home, except that before we partook of the bread and wine we sang:

> Just as I am, without one plea,
> But that Thy blood was shed for me,
> And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come.

After the Benediction we sang:

God be with you till we meet again,
Keep love's banner floating o'er you;
Smite death's threatening waves before you;
God be with you till we meet again.

While I was packing the Communion-set the rain began again to fall, and I had to shelter under a tree. One or two lads joined me, and asked me to take their home addresses in case they 'went under.'

The Friday evening following, groups of soldiers loitered somewhat restlessly about the village. Others stood round the big guns, watching the firing. Many were gathered round little wood fires cooking. They did not know what might happen, they told me, and they intended to prepare for it by having a good supper. I dined at the Regimental Head Quarters. The meal was hurried, and coming events cast their shadow over us. We had to open the window, for the vibration from the big gun opposite threatened to break the glass. The blinding flash and the horrible roar following produced feelings of irritation with each shot.

Dinner ended, the colonel, adjutant, and doctor buckled on their equipment. As we shook hands I wished them success and safe keeping. The men were already mustering in the village

street, and a group of officers who had orders to remain behind, in reserve, were walking towards the church to watch the regiment pass. It was a fine evening. The sky, blue as the sea at Valparaiso, was flecked with clouds, white and beautiful as a navy of becalmed sailing ships. Just as the golden glow of the sun began to burnish the western sky the men stood to attention. They were waiting on the sun, and the sun lingered in its setting. It was taking its last look of many a noble boy, and it seemed loth to go. At the first touch of twilight the men began to march, but, for fear of observation, a space was left between each company. By the church they halted. There we shook hands with the officers and shouted good-bye to the men. Then bravely, with laughter and song, they passed down the road. Other regiments followed, and soon the whole brigade had passed into the twilight.

About midnight a Roman Catholic chaplain and I, provided with steel helmet, gas helmet, water-bottle, and sandwiches, made our way to the Field Ambulance. There, after a short wait, we boarded an ambulance-car and rode through the gunlit darkness to the advanced dressing-station adjoining the communication-trenches in a village on the line. It looked like a few yards of an underground railway, and belonged to the

'elephant' style of dug-out. The day's work had not begun, and we were each given a cup of Oxo. In the corner lay a soldier suffering from shell-shock, and waiting for the departure of the car that brought us down. He was quite deaf, and could not understand it. Every now and then he raised himself up, and tapped his head above the ears, much as a man taps his watch when it has stopped for some unaccountable reason. A few minutes later a youth was brought in suffering from the loss of two fingers. A grenade had accidentally burst in his hand. He had escaped with remarkably small loss, yet he moaned more than any other sufferer that day. The morning wore on, and each hour the number of wounded increased. About 6 the sergeant-major decided to open the second dug-out, and asked me to go with him. Stretcher cases only were to be carried to No. 1, and all walking cases were to go to No. 2. The R.C. chaplain served in the first, and I served in the second. All the morning the bombardment had been terrific. It sounded like the beating of a million iron drums. Great and small filled the air with their clangour. Thousands of shells passed invisibly over our heads, and carried death and destruction to our enemies on the other side of the line. Most of the German shells were concentrated on the infantry in our

trenches, and we were kept busy in the dressing-station. It was hell, with the addition of hideous sounds.

At last our watches stood at 7.30, and we knew that our men were 'over the top' and charging across 'No Man's Land.' The scenes that followed defy description. I regretted that I had watched the men march out, for it almost broke my heart to see the condition in which so many of them came back. We forgot victory and defeat, rights and wrongs, and thought only of the frightful cost of war. The doctors worked like giants inspired. So did the sergeant-major. Soon, however, the steps down to the dug-out were crowded with wounded, while outside they lay on each side of the road waiting their turn for treatment. One of my duties was to pick out the worst cases for immediate attention. Some were in a fainting condition, and others were bleeding through their bandages. Those who had but slight wounds, which had been dressed by the regimental doctors in the trenches, were hurried through without further bandaging, and told to walk to the dressing-station at the next village. Registration and inoculation had alike to be dispensed with till they reached the Field Ambulance. We found wounds in every part of the body. Many had slight wounds in the head and owed their

lives to their helmets, the steel of which had, though pierced, broken the force of the shell-fragments. All were brave and cheerful. They had been in hell, and the dressing-station was a resting-place on the way to 'Blighty.' A man had only lost an arm where he expected to lose all. He had been fortunate, and cheerfulness became him. Besides, there were others to think of, and cheerfulness was a duty. There was no moaning, except when the doctor probed a wound, or moved a shattered arm. When I took a man out of his turn there was no complaint by the other men. And gladly, after treatment, did they make way for a fainting man to get into a car before his turn. They talked of the battle with enthusiasm—such as *could* talk. They laughed at their wounds, and called themselves lucky in having got 'Blighty ones.' All were Territorials, and all alike carried themselves like heroes. There was a fine pride in the manner of some of the more seriously wounded. They had 'done their bit,' and knew it. They were too proud to moan. Some of the wounded we had to carry in our arms to the cars. Oxo and tea were passed round as quickly as they could be made. Many were almost dying for a drop of water. The need was so great that I passed a bucket and a cup outside to a Church of England chaplain, who was him-

self wounded later in the day. Only by ceaseless work could one keep from tears. My hands were red, yet the sight of blood had but little effect. It was the comparison of the scene before the battle with the sight after it that threatened to break open the fountain of tears.

Not till about 1 p.m. did the stream of wounded grow thin. Then one of the doctors asked me to go with him to breakfast—for none had touched food since the night before. Passing down the street we found several seriously wounded men in an unprotected house outside the No. 1 dug-out, which was still fully occupied. We ran back for dressings and filled our pockets, but the absence of water and medical instruments led the doctor to abandon his idea of dressing the wounded where they lay, and the C.O. coming up ordered the men to be put into cars and driven to the Field Ambulance before the Germans began shelling the street. Coats off, we lent a hand to the hard-worked R.A.M.C. stretcher-bearers, and soon the wounded were on their way to safety and attention. A little lower down a dozen Germans lay by the wayside wounded. They were not serious cases, and, having been bandaged, were waiting for cars to take them away. Some one was giving them Oxo, and I got them some cigarettes. They seemed surprised at an of-

ficer attending to them, and thanked me with the French word, '*Merci.*'

After a little bully beef and bread at the Doctors' Mess, the R.C. padre and I, at the request of the C.O., left for the Field Ambulance, where he said there was now the greater call on our services. For some two miles we followed the track, which led through the English and French batteries. They were working at full strength. German shells fell here and there, but probably our greatest danger was from 'premature bursts' from our own guns. We were too weary to hurry, but felt relieved when we got behind the last battery. The track led to a road that was being shelled by the Germans to prevent reinforcements being sent up. When close to our billet (a cottage, afterwards blown up) we had three narrow escapes. After a meal we continued our way to the Field Ambulance. There we found the ground covered with wounded men. They were lying on stretchers and waiting for cars to carry them to the casualty clearing-station. The tents also were full of wounded. These were receiving the attention of the doctors. In one tent the most serious and delicate operations were being performed. We passed round tea, Oxo, and cigarettes to those awaiting removal, and in some cases we 'wrote home' for men.

All night the cars carried men away, and in a few days there was no sign that a battle had ever taken place. The tents were empty, and the grass was as green as ever. The wounded who were fit to travel were being welcomed in England, and the more serious cases were being tenderly nursed by Englishwomen in our hospitals in France. Never had men fought more gallantly—not even at Balaclava. They had charged, some smoking cigarettes the while, through three barrages of fire, and for several hours held the third German trench. Then, thinned in numbers and unable to get bombs through the barrages, they had been driven back until they reached their own lines. The killed, many of the wounded, and some who were unwounded were left in the German trenches. Their names appear among the 'missing.' In most cases nothing is known of them on this side of the line. They went 'over the top,' and they did not return. Only the enemy can relieve our suspense concerning them. During a short truce next day the wounded were brought in from 'No Man's Land,' but one, in the short time allowed for search, escaped notice, and was discovered on the twelfth night by a patrol party. His recovery at the Field Ambulance caused much joy among the doctors.

The calling of the roll on the morning after

a battle is the saddest of all ceremonies, for

> We look before and after,
> And pine for what is not.

How the regiments were desolated! They had been called upon to sacrifice themselves for others, to hold as many guns and Germans against them as possible, while their comrades farther south broke through. To the end of life, as we sit in our peaceful homes, we shall see faces in the fire; faces that will never grow old, but remain for ever lit with hope and courage, as when, in the glowing beauty of the sunset, they marched through the village street and faded away in the deepening twilight.

VII

'BLIGHTY'

TWO sentences flash like lightning through the army in France. The one is, 'Leave is opened'; the other is, 'Leave is closed.' The first brings a smile to every face; the second casts a shadow. An officer said to me some time ago that Leave is the greatest invention of the War. Nothing else, he said, could have kept them going.

And now I have been on leave myself. I got the good news on a Friday, and sent a letter home, but I outdistanced it by four days.

On the Saturday evening, just before our regiment marched into the trenches, I with my bundle in my hand, set off for the nearest railway town. It was boyish, I know, to laugh from inward joy alone, but I could not help it. And it was boyish for those who saw me to look so envious, but I know they could not help it. 'Blighty' would make even the Sphinx betray its secret. I hailed a passing wagon, and, of course, must tell the driver that I was on my

way to 'Blighty.' My words lit up his face like the striking of a match. Then the light went out. He had a long time to wait for his next leave.

I spent the night with a colleague, and for half an hour after getting into bed I watched him filling a little box with souvenirs that he wished me to post to his wife when I got home. We were up at 5.15 a.m. Breakfast followed. At 6.30 we were at the station. At 6.50 my friend was waving his hand to me as the train steamed out. Until the train actually started we were haunted with the fear that leave might, at the last moment, be closed. My fellow traveller—a Church of England chaplain —was greatly perturbed. Even as he set off to the station a telegram had been handed to him announcing that he had been transferred to the Base, and must report to his senior before embarking. His nerves were all jangled, and he feared that his leave would be stopped. He had been a bombing officer before becoming a chaplain, and somehow had missed his turn for leave. For ten months he had been in France. Many a time and oft he had rubbed shoulders with death, but he felt he could go on no longer. He had reached 'the limit.'

Farther down the line two other officers joined us. They had landed in France from

Gallipoli, and had been over a year from England. As the train crawled along—and a fast train in France is a luxury that no soldier knows—we related our varying experiences, and sought for signs by which to read the secret of the future. At one of the stations the train stopped for some twenty minutes, and we tried to get food and drink. But it was in vain. Hundreds of Tommies crowded round the buffet, and we had to be content with buying a few oranges at the news-stall. Farther down the line we halted for half an hour, and here the Y.M.C.A. supplied the troops with free tea, and sold them biscuits and chocolate. We had, however, to provide our own mugs, and here Tommy had the advantage. At last some one unearthed a cup, and we used it in turn. We were given a brown liquid. It was tea, if the common report may be trusted; and as the Apostle Paul advises us to eat that which is set before us, asking no questions, it may be best to accept the common report.

At last, after fourteen hours in the train, we reached the boat. We showed our leave-warrants, and gave the R.T.O. (Railway Transport Officer) the larger half. Up the gangway we passed, and hurried down into the sleeping saloon to find a bunk. Having appropriated one each, we sauntered about, waiting for the

hour when cold dinner would be served. Suddenly an officer hurried through the crowd, shouting out the name of Lieut. ———. There was no reply. Lieut. ———, like young Saul of earlier days, was hiding, among the stuff. Perhaps the officer was bringing the lieutenant good news, but the lieutenant thought that no news was the best news until the boat had started for 'Blighty.' 'Any one seen Lieut. ———?' cried the officer. No! No one had seen him. After a time dinner began. While one lot of men was feasting another lot stood round waiting to take their places. At last all were served, and we prepared for sleep. Crowds of Tommies covered the deck and slept in the purer but colder air. Others slept in the saloon below. We lay in the lower saloon, and our bunks were just under the port-holes. Each bunk was occupied, and each yard of the floor. There was little to choose between a bunk and the floor, for we all had to sleep, or rather lie, on the bare boards without mattress or blanket.

At noon of night, after three hours' rocking at the quay, the boat started for 'Blighty.' All was still on board. With their lifebelts for pillows, officers and men were at rest. Most of them seemed asleep. Some were unmistakably asleep, for they were snoring. Oh, the boon of sleep! To be able to forget the heaving of the

sea and to lie like a child in a cradle! To forget the lurking submarine and the lifebelt under your head! After the intolerable weariness of the journey, what a boon to be able to snore with utter indifference to all created things! I am a poor sleeper, and not a good sailor, and I must have been green with envy as I watched for many long hours those blissful, snoring sleepers.

At last the sleepers awoke and strolled on deck. I had taken my boots off, and tried to put them on again. But it could only be done by easy stages. It was worse than sitting on a tight-rope to put one's boots on. After each pull at the lace I had to lie down again, for my stomach, like Dublin, was seething with revolt, and needed careful governing. At last I reached the deck and the fresh air, and felt that victory was assured. We were within sight of the haven where we would be.

> Oh! dream of joy! Is this indeed
> The lighthouse top I see?
> Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?
> Is this my ain countree?

I had but a halfpenny in English money, and with it I bought a paper at the station. What a bargain it seemed to buy, on the day of issue, for a halfpenny a paper that in France had cost

us 2*d*. the day after its issue! I borrowed ninepence from the Church of England chaplain (who had had no opportunity to report to his senior, and was glad on that account), and I sent a telegram home to announce my arrival. What a luxury it was to be on a train that could run; to see hedges to the fields, and farmhouses in the midst of pastures!

Soon we were in dear old London. While we were yet a great way off it seemed to stretch out its all-embracing arms and draw us to its bosom. I changed French money into English, got a wash, a shave, and a shampoo. Then I got some refreshments. A taxi rushed me through familiar streets to Euston Station. There, waiting for a train, I almost fell asleep. The train came, however, and in less than an hour I got out, and stepped into a motor-bus that carried me to the end of my street. I looked at the chimneys. The home-fires were burning. The smoke of their burning curled up towards heaven as sweetly, it seemed to me, as the smoke of the altar fires in the days of old. As I drew nearer I saw my wife at the upstairs window. She was at her watch-tower, waiting and watching, like many another faithful heart. I opened the garden gate. 'Scott,' hearing the sound, bounded through the open window of the dining-room; but seeing me in khaki instead

of black, he hesitated, and barked as at a stranger. 'Scott!' I called, and at the sound of my voice he rushed across the lawn to be the first to give me welcome. I had wondered many a time if he would know me on my return, and his kisses on my hands warmed my heart. Impeded by 'Scott's' welcome, I reached the entrance. The door opened, and my wife stood before me. I had reached 'Blighty.'

VIII

AN INSPIRER ON THE PARAPET

IT was in a trench in the early morning. The soldiers were awaiting the word of command which would hurl them against the most strongly fortified position of the battle-line. With them was a detachment of the Royal Engineers, whose duty it was to go over with the fighters, and, as each trench was captured, turn the parados against the enemy and prepare for the inevitable counter-attack. The work of the Engineers was not to lead, but to follow; not to attack, but to help the victors to defend their gains. The fighters with their weapons and the Engineers with their tools all stood ready to leap over the parapet.

Promptly the command to advance rang out, and, like a dam bursting its bounds, a flood of living valour rolled upon the foe. Many miles in breadth this living Niagara leapt forth. Its seething mass of men scrambled over the bullet-swept parapet. Some fell back to rise no more. But the mass swept on. Among the first over

in the trench of which I write was an Engineer. He ought to have been behind, but he was in front. He leapt upon the parapet, and stood like a lightning-conductor amid a blinding sheet of flame and thunder-bolts. With one arm pointing to the enemy and another outstretched toward the men behind him, his voice rose above the tumult, 'On, Scottish, on! On, Scottish, on!' And, like the wind over their native moors, the kilted lads swept across No Man's Land, and hurled themselves upon the enemy.

I, who helped the wounded down the steps of the advanced dressing-station, know how well they fought and how manfully they bore their wounds. They smiled bravely at each stab of pain, and murmured, 'The battalion has done well.' When the battle was over, the Engineer who, in the heart of the storm, had cheered them on, was found a nervous wreck. He had risked all, and spent all, in one mad, glorious cheer. And when the colonel of this Scottish regiment sent in his list of heroes deserving decorations he did not forget the stranger who had cheered them on to battle.

The Engineer is, in private life, a modest Christian, and an ardent worker in one of our London churches. Week by week he had, amid the drabness of civil life, sought to guide and inspire the young to deeds of nobleness, and

when the blaze of battle burst upon him it found him unchanged—an inspirer still. The bayonet and its glory had been denied him. Only a shovel was his. But if he could not be a warrior, he would be a warrior's inspiration and guard. He would cheer him on to battle, deepen his trench, build up his parados, spread his barbed wire, and prepare his gun-emplacements. And when the fight was over, the self-forgetful hero of the spade found his name written beside the names of the heroes of the sword.

It is well when the doer's name and the inspirer's are placed side by side upon the scroll of honour. They represent two temperaments and two accomplishments which may be equally noble. The one represents the active temperament, and the other the passive. They are the two halves of a circle. The doer is the power upon the throne, and the inspirer is the power behind the throne. Women do not go to war. They are incapable of it. They are the passive half of humanity. But they inspire war. Ruskin said but the truth when he asserted that if the women of the world banded themselves together they could stop all war. So they could, for good or evil. They do not stop all war, because they know there are worse things than war, and they would rather see their sons dead than dishonoured. Women are responsible for war as men. Women have always buckled on

the warrior's armour, and always will while wars last.

On my way back to France after leave, I watched from our carriage window the scene as the train slowly drew into the port of embarkation. At the doors of all the houses along the railway-side were women, many with babes in their arms, waving us good-bye. And our hearts replied, 'God bless you.' They know the time of the 'leave train,' and every day they stand at their doors to wave a blessing to the returning soldiers. It is our last sight of English faces and English homes, and could any sight be sweeter or more inspiring? 'Mother,' said a brave Scots boy, a member of my church, 'I enlisted because I read of what the Germans had done in Belgium, and I thought of you and my sister.' The women did more than Kitchener in recruiting an army. They beamed on the men in khaki, praised them, worshipped them, and walked out with them. They transformed common men into heroes, and made them seek to be worthy of the faith reposed in them. The men in khaki walked on the sunny side of the street, while the men in blacks and greys walked in the shadow. If a man wished for the sunshine of a woman's smile he must get into khaki. Then she gave him both smiles and tears. Women could not go to war, but they

could, and did, inspire men to go. And now that the men are at the Front the women are still their inspirers.

As one of our wounded lay on a stretcher that July evening I said to him, 'Cheer up, old boy; you'll soon be in a nice white bed, and you'll have women nurses instead of men.' His face lit up with pleasure. 'That will be "a bit of all right,"' he said. A few days later we got the English illustrated papers, and saw photographs of women lined up in rows at Charing Cross Station, and throwing roses into the cars of the wounded as they passed. Even the flower girls were throwing their roses; throwing their very livelihood at the heroes, and refusing purchasers. The sight of such things almost makes the men here wish to get wounded, and pay with red wounds for red roses. It is the knowledge that they have the women's love, admiration, and prayers that keeps the men bright and brave in the trenches.

In like manner the passive past lives in the positive present. The most valuable element in history is its inspiration. The great gift of Nelson to his country was not the defeat of the French, but the inspiration of his example. Nelson and Drake and the heroes of old walk the deck with Jellicoe and Beatty. They being dead yet speak. You cannot superannuate

them. They will rule the Navy to the end of time. Gordon, Wolfe, Outram, Havelock, Sir John Moore—these men's greatest gifts to the Nation were not their deeds, but the inspiration of their characters. They rule the Army from their graves more firmly than does the Minister of War. Franklin and Captain Scott gave the world infinitely more by their failures than they could have done by success. Scott will be a fount of inspiration for centuries to come—a well at which all our boys will drink. The inspirer multiplies his life, even in his own generation, and cheats the grave by living on in the lives of others long after his bones have turned to dust. The names in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews have shone like stars in every dark age, and have been the inspiration of all the Christian martyrs. As the bones of Elisha brought life to the dead body thrown against them, so the inspirers, even from their graves, touch the world's dead soul into life.

The short-sighted, cold-blooded utilitarian may sneer at enthusiasm and cry, 'Why this waste?' He may denounce it as hysteria or fanaticism, but it is on its wings of inspiration that man has risen to the highest peaks of achievement. There is a Peter the Hermit behind every Crusade, and a gallant encourager on the parapet at every heroic charge. The

cynic, sitting in his arm-chair, where shells never burst, may define him as 'a fellow who lost his head,' but the soldiers who followed him over the parapet called him a hero. That great inspirer, the author of the 'Marseillaise,' is as potent in the French Army of to-day as General Joffre himself; and it is in the acknowledgment of this fact that his bones have been removed to a grave near that of the great doer —Napoleon. Higher still, it was because Mary, with her alabaster box of ointment, was a great inspirer that Christ declared that her name should for ever be associated with His own great Name. And it is a promise that the Lord of all will not forget the inspirers when He rewards the doers. When the battle is over, they too shall have a share in the decorations of the King.

IX

THE TOUCH OF THE WIND

THERE'S the wind on the heath, brother.' We are town-dwellers and had forgotten. We need Borrow's gypsey to tell us of the unappropriated joy that plays about on the heath. I, for one, had to come to France to learn that Jesus loved the wind, and to understand something of its wonderful—I was going to say—personality. How do I know that Jesus loved the wind? Because, since I landed, His words about the wind come to me as often and unbidden as the wind itself. Most of my services have been held in the corners of fields. As a rule there is no building available; but the earth is wide, and the sky is a beautiful roof—with tracery more delicate than that of King's College Chapel.

It has happened, therefore, that our hymns have been sung where there were no walls to bound them, and where the wind might come like any other worshipper, and not through the crevices of ill-fitting doors and windows. And the wind *did* come to the services, and they were

the richer for its coming. One felt its presence as one feels the presence of a saintly and beautiful woman in a service. While I have been praying and the men stood silently around, the wind has come. It has caressed my cheek as softly as the gentlest mother's hand, and it has whispered in my ear, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.' And I have felt encouraged and comforted as one that is comforted of his mother.

None of us has felt a mother's hand out here, but none of us has forgotten its touch. Now the wind's touch is a mother's, and Christ must have felt that when He used the word 'born.' Surely when He spoke of the mysterious comings and goings of the wind He was thinking of a mother's, for it is a mother's comings and goings which are the most intimate and mystic of all. Can anyone tell when his mother first came to him? Has any one been where she could not, and did not, come?

We have no mothers out here, and yet we have. Our mothers come and go just as they ever did. They look in at our barn, or cottage, or dug-out at night, just as they did when we slept in our little cots. They look at our scattered belongings, and we try to tidy up a bit to

please them. They glance at the dinner-table, and we get a white cloth so that we may shock them no longer by our barbarian feasts. We meet in a field for worship, and they come. It is true the service is put in 'Orders,' but our mothers don't see the 'Orders.' Yet they find out about the service, and come. We lie in hospital, and they come. The Army Map Department issues them no maps, but they find their way, somehow. A poor fellow smiles in his sleep, and we know why. His mother has come to him. It may be a man doesn't want his mother to come. It may be he shuts his heart against her, as we shut our churches to the wind; but she comes, and with her quick eye she discovers why he did not wish her to come. Oh! the comings and goings of a mother! There is nothing like them but the comings and goings of the wind.

Now Christ loved the wind. It reminded Him of His mother and of God. We know, and yet can hardly say how we know. But Christ was away from His home and mother, and we are. His services were out in the fields, and ours are. The wind kissed His cheeks as He preached, and it kisses ours. He was a wanderer, and it followed Him. We, too, are wanderers, and sometimes have not where to lay our heads. But the wind wanders with us.

He lived under the shadow of violent death, and the faithful wind told Him that His mother would be there when 'it' came upon Him. And we are under the shadow. It lowers so darkly that no one pretends to ignore it.

At times His sorrow took Him out of the house where He was lodging with His disciples, and led Him to some upland. There the wind came to Him without hindrance. They were alone under the stars. It caressed Him, and whispered to Him of One who would never leave Him nor forsake Him, of One who would come to Him in His hour of need even as the wind came, and as secretly and mysteriously. As He felt its touch, and listened to its voice, He was comforted. He knelt to pray, and even as He knelt the wind drew its fingers through His hair as His mother had often done when, as a child, He had knelt at her knees.

His prayer ceased, and He listened to the wind in the trees. Was it the wind, or was it the sound of angel wings? He had but to speak, and a legion of angels would be at His side. No, His strength would not fail in the hour of trial. He would be a Conqueror and not a coward on the day of battle.

'There's the wind on the heath, brother'—on the heath of France. 'It bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but

canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. It comforts like a mother, and like a mother it makes us think of God. It was a friend to Jesus, and He loved it. It came to Him in Gethsemane, and was with Him on Olivet. And the wind is still with us as it was with Him. It is here in this Gethsemane of the nations. It is here as a friend, and we love it as we love the mother who led us to God. For it speaks to us of that divine and mysterious Spirit of whom it is the earthly symbol—that Spirit who is moving secretly through the camp, appearing when and where we least expect Him, and causing men to be born again; born to a nobleness they had not dreamed of, and to an experience of spiritual exaltation to which they had been strangers. Thank God! There's a wind on this blood-stained heath, brother; and it bloweth where it listeth.

O Breath of God, breathe on us *now*!
And move within us while we pray.

X

TOMMY'S MIND

WE have the best fed, best clothed, best paid, best washed army that ever, in the world's history, took the field. And these things will tell in the final battles. Kitchener, like Wellington and Nelson, knew that wars are won by bread and bacon, soap and water, boots and socks, and spare money jingling in the pocket. He knew the value of physical health and comfort, cheerfulness of spirit, and the conviction that every one was having fair and generous treatment. He knew that in a long war the human factor is the chief factor, and that he was not only raising a large army, but a healthy one, a contented one, and a winning one. The Germans put their supreme trust in guns. Kitchener put his in men. And his men will speak when their guns are silent. Guns are easily made. Men are not. A happy body is the first condition for a happy mind. And Tommy has got it. Of course, there are military operations

when the body is strained to its utmost, and when the weaker men break down. The marches are long, or the weather inclement. The trenches are muddy, and the dug-outs flooded. Clothing is worn out, or food cut off by the rapidity of the advance or the fire of the enemy. These hardships must come to even the best organized and the most humanely governed army. Tommy knows that, and is contented in mind, though ill at ease in body. It is in these times that Tommy is at his greatest. Our men are the most sublime when their conditions are the most sordid.

I met some of our men coming out of the trenches last week. It had been wet for days, and the trenches were in an awful state. Every man was covered with mire to his shoulders, and a kilted battalion which came out with them was a sight to make one laugh and cry at the same time. Most of the men were limping, or dragging their feet; for the trench was new and narrow, and they could not lie down to rest their legs. They were too tired to march. They simply dragged themselves along the road and threw themselves down to rest till the other companies came up. They said that the trenches had been awful, but not a soldier breathed a word of complaint against any man under the sun. They had contented minds. All

that could be done to mitigate their hardships had been done, and they were satisfied.

At the head of one platoon was a young officer from Manchester. He is an exceptionally strong man, but he could hardly drag his feet after him. On other days I had marched at his side for sixteen or seventeen miles, and he had not shown the slightest sign of fatigue. When he had seen one of his men staggering under his pack and about to fall on the march, he had relieved him of his rifle and carried it himself. But on this occasion he, too, was dragging his feet, and his walk was eloquent of the hardships he had endured. We stopped for a word or two. Was he downhearted, or discontented, or beaten in spirit? His face was wreathed in smiles. I looked at the mire on his tunic. The tunic had come out of the trench, but his face seemed to have come out of a bathroom. 'You managed to get a shave,' I said. 'Yes; I was expecting visitors,' he replied, and laughed at the absurdity of the idea of receiving daintily dressed ladies in such a hole. What a glory such a man is! Can any one wonder that he was given the Military Cross in the last list of honours?

I saw the regiment on the next day. There was a smile on every face, but not a hair or speck of dirt; and every particle of trench mire

had gone from their clothing and boots. Yet at night they had to return to the trenches to dig till daylight. Tommy's mind is a fine one and a contented one. How does he use it, however, in times of leisure? There are three main things he does with it. He employs it in reading, writing, and listening to gramophones. Perhaps the battalion has been in the line digging all night, but by noon they are all up and about, and have had breakfast. You see them sitting or lying about, anywhere and everywhere, under cover or with only the sky above them. Some are brushing their tunics. Others are sitting half-dressed examining the seams of their clothing for nature's waifs and strays.

Most of the other men are reading or writing. You will see scores of them sitting solitary and writing letters. If a shell sounds rather near, the lad lifts up his head for a moment, looks in the direction of the sound, and goes on with his writing. Nine out of ten of the letters are to women. They are to mothers, wives and sweethearts. A father gets one sometimes and a sister occasionally, but only a mother can compete with a sweetheart (actual or possible) or a wife. A soldier's letter is not easy to write, and the people at home must not expect much. The girls, in particular, must read between the lines. Even though he is only going to sign his

name 'Jack' or 'Harry,' a lad doesn't care to speak in a letter as he would speak under 'the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale.' The letter has to be read by an officer before it can be sealed and sent. Neither can he say anything about the War. 'Mum's the word.' And as there is nothing else here, except the weather, he must be content to write about the weather. The rest of the letter he has to fill up with thanks for past parcels and hopes for future ones. If you see 'dear mother' in the middle of a letter it is a sure sign that the next word is a request for a parcel. They know that a mother would pawn her Sunday dress to be called 'dear' by her boy at the Front. They are wonderfully sly, these boys, sly as children, and they know how to talk to their mothers. 'Dear' at the beginning of a letter is a free gift, but 'dear' in the middle must be paid for. It is 'dear' in more senses than one. But the mother has not yet been born who would not gladly pay for the word to the extent of half her kingdom. Ah, these rascally boys! They will never act as anything but boys to their mothers. It doesn't pay to grow up. Mothers don't like it. Mothers will be mothers, so boys will be boys.

All the other soldiers are reading. I was passing some the other day when I noticed a new kind of grave. There were a mound and a

kind of a cross bearing the words, 'A live shell buried here.' 'So you bury things alive here, and warn one another against their resurrection?' I said to a lad standing with a book in his hand. 'Yes,' he said, 'and there, close by, under that sack, is one laid out, and not buried. We couldn't find an undertaker.' 'Oh,' I said, glancing at his book, 'so you're studying shorthand.' 'Yes,' he said; 'one must do something to occupy one's mind.' I asked several men if they wanted anything to read. 'Oh, yes,' they said eagerly; 'have you got anything?' 'I have just added some books to my "Little Lending Library,"' I replied, 'and you will find them in a biscuit-box hung up under the archway near the Orderly Room.' The men rushed out, and when I returned, a few minutes later, the box was empty. I have sometimes offered socks to a man and he has replied, 'We have just had new socks served out; you had better give them to some one else who needs them more.' But I have never known the offer of a book declined. The bodies of the men are infinitely better fed and clothed than their minds. It is forgotten that the man in the army of to-day is a reader and thinker. He would infinitely prefer books to cigarettes and chocolates. He is not a child, neither is he the illiterate soldier of fifty years ago. Tommy has a mind as well as a body.

There are no bookstalls here, and he cannot bring books with him because, like the snail, he has to carry on his back all he possesses, and weapons and clothing must come first.

On Saturday night I met one of my old boys from Old Ford. 'Do you remember,' he asked, 'those Saturday nights when you used to give us talks on books? I have borrowed *Palgrave's Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* from a chum, and I read it at nights, when the guns are going loudly, to calm my mind. It has to be a good book to do that, sir—rubbish won't do it. And bless me, when I get to Burns's poems, such as "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," the memory of those Saturday nights all comes back to me. He'll never get the book back. I cannot part with it. I shall hold on to it till the end of the War.' There is an appetite for books, but not enough books to satisfy it. And the desire is for worthy books, books that a man can live on and die on. The Churches ought to have a 'Book Sunday' to buy books for the boys at the Front, and the Town Councils ought to send out their lending libraries.

XI

TOMMY'S RELIGION

I THINK *A Student in Arms* is wrong when he says that the men believe absolutely in the Christian virtues without ever connecting them in their minds with *Christ*. I am sure they *do* connect them with Christ. He is the background of all their moral and religious thinking. But a background is all-pervading rather than obtrusive and striking. The more perfect and potent the artist has made the background the less noticeable it is. We do not notice the sky much, but it is more to us than we are aware. Behind the British soldier's thinking stands Christ. Take Christ away, and he would feel as desolate and lost as if you took the sky away. He never forgets, in his heart, that there once lived on this blood-stained earth a real 'White Man.' Talk of Christ lightly, and the soldiers distrust you and say one to another, 'I hope he isn't a humbug.' But speak Christ's name quietly and sincerely, and there falls a hush over the mess-

room or billet. There is no other name that has such instant and extraordinary power over a group of soldiers. Christ's name is not often mentioned, and rarely taken in vain. He seems to stand behind the soldier's life, mildly yet strongly influencing it, like some sweet mother or wife or child who has passed within the veil, and whose name is so sacred that we only speak it in high moments. When the soldiers march into the trenches to die for others, they faintly feel that they are following Christ. But they do not speak of it, because they are too humble to compare their self-sacrifice with His. It is because of this inward, half-unconscious looking to Christ that they have been so much impressed by the wayside Calvaries. I do not think there is a man in the Army who could be got, on any consideration whatever, to fire a shot at one of these wayside crosses. They represent Christ, the 'White Man,' *their* Man. I believe a man would have a bad time out here if he dared to say anything against Christ.

But while they connect their belief in the Christian virtues with Christ, they do not—the bulk of them—connect these virtues with the Church. Christ is a 'White Man,' but they suspect the ordinary church-going Christian of being but a whitewashed man. Scratch him, and they fear the white will come off. They see the

likeness in name between Christ and Christian, but not the likeness in life. They have weighed up the Church, and, in their judgment, it is found wanting. The Church must alter, or I fear it will, at the end of the War, have little attraction for the men at the Front. Christ attracts them, but not the Church, and for the simple reason that it is not sufficiently like Him, and everybody knows it and feels it.

The Church must replace *Don't* by *Do*. With the Church's present conception of religion one might almost define a Christian as a man who does not drink, does not smoke, does not swear, does not waste money, does not dance, does not go to theatres, does not work or play on Sundays, does not associate with 'doubtful characters,' does not gamble, &c., &c. He is a man who 'does not.' Now let a man take, say, the Gospel of St. Luke and read it through at a sitting, forgetting all the commentaries and all his own preconceptions, and at the end let him say if the Christianity of the churches is the Christianity of Christ. Is it as the moon to the sun, a faithful though faint reflection? Rightly or wrongly, most of the men in the Army believe it is not. Yet they are looking for the shimmering white robe of Christ, and will follow its gleam—even into the churches.

XII

TOMMY'S MORALS

A FEW days ago an over-anxious father, writing to me about a boy in this division, said, 'I thought when he joined the Army there would be a chance of reform, but it seems to be one of the worst places in the world to bring about a reformation of character. I believe there are thousands of our young fellows now in France who never touched this cursed thing (drink) before joining the Army who to-day both drink and swear.'

Now is that the whole truth, or only one side of it? I have lived with this division (mostly London men) for over six months at the Front, and in the little villages at the back of the Front. Without using either a whitewash brush or a tar brush, I will paint Tommy as I have seen him. I am not a policeman, but a padre, and have looked for the good in men as earnestly as for the bad. Some think of Tommy as being clothed in sins of scarlet hue. Others think of him as robed in the spotless white of righteous-

ness. But, as a matter of fact, Tommy's moral dress is neither scarlet nor white. It is khaki. I have seen the khaki turn to glistening white, but that has been in the great moments of life, when he has climbed the Mount that looks down both on the Valley of Life and the Valley of Death. Then Tommy has stood transfigured.

But his everyday dress is khaki, and it is the only one he cares for the crowds to see. Sing a song of his courage, and he drives you off the stage with ironical cheers. Speak of him as a hero, and he thinks you are 'pulling his leg,' and winks a knowing wink at his neighbour. He tells you of times when he 'got the wind up,' but never of deeds of daring. It is bad form in the Army.

The Tommy at the Front is temperate. There are about twenty thousand men in a division, and I have seen many divisions. But in my six months here I have not seen one helplessly drunk or disorderly soldier. And I have only seen four or five showing any signs of intoxication. A soldier in this regiment lost a stripe through being found intoxicated, but I did not see him. Also, on July 1, a sergeant of the Royal Engineers ran amuck with a loaded revolver, and shot a corporal who used to be a member of my church at Old Ford. I buried

my comrade, but I did not see the sergeant. He is said to have been drunk, but this could only have been by stealing the rum ration. Those of us who lived through the bombardment of that day know that he may have been driven temporarily insane. The verdict of the court-martial I did not hear.

I have seen in five minutes at Euston Station more drunkenness than in six months out here. It is a crime here to sell spirits to soldiers, and a crime to buy. Officers can buy spirits in cases of a dozen bottles, but not by the glass. Tommy cannot get it at all. Whisky is seen in, I think, all officers' messes, though some officers prefer their water neat. Doctors' messes have, so far as I have observed, the most teetotallers. A non-commissioned officer is sometimes offered a glass of whisky by his officer; and the sergeants' mess is, in some companies, able to get an occasional bottle from the captain, but the practice is illegal. It is a left-handed action that must be done secretly. Tommy's meals are necessarily teetotal. The *estaminets* are only open to soldiers for two hours at noon and two hours in the evening, and all drinks must be consumed on the premises. The drinks available are mostly light wines, light beers, cider, grenadine, and citron. French wines and beers are lighter than English, and are the daily drink

of French families. I have seen no French civilian drunk on them, and on his shilling a day the most thirsty Tommy could hardly reach intoxication through them. English beers are, however, to be obtained at the more enterprising *estaminets*. No doubt many men who came out as teetotallers now take French wines and beers. This does not, however, mean that they have 'gone to the dogs,' or will continue the habit in England.

Water out here is scarce and bad. No well must be used until the doctor has analysed the water. Long use has inoculated the people against its germs, and they can drink with impunity water that would kill new-comers. Even the best water needs boiling. Much of it must be chlorinated. Tommy cannot get aerated waters. Mineral waters seem unknown. The French cannot make tea. Coffee they make perfectly, but serve it without milk and in cups like thimbles. Tommy has, therefore, little choice in drinks. Also, in the little villages along the line where most of the troops are, the *estaminets* are the only places where the men can gather under a roof and sit at a table. At best Tommy's billet is a barn, and at worst a trench. The warmth, light, and comfort of an *estaminet* are not to be despised. He pays for his seat by a glass or two of liquors but slightly

alcoholic. It is that, or the cold barn with chlorinated water, or the everlasting stew called tea. Even so, many choose the barn, and they were not used to barns at home.

In winter a rum ration of an eighth of a pint is issued to all the men in the trenches *who care to take it*. The ration is not issued as a beverage, but as a medicine. It is supposed to keep out the cold and induce sleep. It is, so far as I can gather, recommended by most of the regimental doctors. In summer the ration is dropped, except that before a battle a ration is *sometimes* served out.

Many people in the homeland have been alarmed by their boys' references to 'canteens.' A canteen is a good thing with a bad name. It is a shop, opened by the military authorities, where soldiers can buy groceries and other necessaries at reasonable prices. It is very seldom that a canteen sells drink, though cases of wines and spirits can be bought at some of the largest. Many canteens are run by chaplains.

To sum up: If there are fewer strict teetotallers in the Army in France than in civil life, there are also fewer drunkards. I wish our brave lads were as safe from strong drink when home on leave as they are here; and that the people of England were as sober as their soldiers at the Front.

Barrack life has a tendency to increase immorality, and after wars there is generally an increase of venereal disease. The separation of masses of men from the influence and conversation of pure women has led them into the company of evil women. In this War the separation is on a larger scale than ever. Will it be followed by the same evil effects? I think not, for there is a moral purpose in this War unknown since Cromwell's day. It is not safe to foretell the future from the past, for the foreteller is not always a seer. Often he fails to see vital spiritual differences. Two years ago the papers were full of baneful prophecies of the immoral conduct which would ensue as a result of the raising and billeting of the new armies. It was a libel on our youth. The foretellers had not realized the moral fervour which made our lads soldiers and our girls their inspirers and comrades. There *is* immorality in the Army, but there is also immorality in civil life. Is it greater in the Army than it would have been in civil life? I doubt it. The imminence of death is an example of influences which cut both ways. Some it makes reckless, and they say, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.' 'We are young,' they say; 'we have not lived, and yet we have to die. We may not eat the permitted fruit; let us eat the

forbidden.' Others the imminence of death sobers and sanctifies, and barring the entrance to the house of sin they see an angel with a flaming sword. So it is with other deciding influences. What spurs on one man restrains another. We cannot, therefore, foretell the final gain or loss. I will therefore relate only what I have seen.

I met a youth of this division at the Field Ambulance. He was eighteen years of age, and tainted with venereal disease. He had been trained near Cambridge for several months. He came to France pure. At the Base he was in a camp three weeks. One night he got a pass into the town, and with another soldier entered a State-regulated house of vice. There were, he said, several such houses, and many soldiers frequenting them. When I met him he had just reached the Front, and as a result of his one transgression found himself unfit for duty. I have heard of other cases, but I have not been at the Base, nor in the other towns where such houses are said to exist. I can, therefore, only speak from hearsay.

Here, on the actual Front, I have come across no proved case of immorality. There is no possibility of immorality in the trenches, and in the villages where the men rest when out of the trenches I have neither seen nor heard of any

misconduct. Our soldiers are friendly and respectful to the French women and girls, but there is no 'walking out' with them, and no unseemly familiarity. They have lived up to Lord Kitchener's counsel, and are popular and respected in the homes of the people. They are as well behaved here as in our own homes. They think there are no girls like English girls, and their respect for them makes them respectful to all.

Even in Shakespeare's time the soldier was 'full of strange oaths,' and his vocabulary has been handed down from generation to generation. My correspondent speaks of the Army as a place where men learn to swear, and the newspapers are constantly printing protests against the language used in the camp and on the parade ground. It is undoubtedly bad, but is it much more so than in the mine and workshop? Much of the language complained of is not *morally* bad at all. It is merely a misuse of words, as when a Varsity man calls a thing 'awfully jolly.' Tommy wants to be emphatic, and having few words at command he uses such as are in fashion at the moment. His strong adjectives offend our taste, but are certainly not immoral. Nor must we confound bullying, hectoring language with blasphemy.

When we come to the real thing we find that

there is comparatively little blasphemy in the New Army. You can live in a camp for days without ever hearing the words 'God' or 'Christ' taken in vain. The men neither swear by God nor call on God to curse. The word 'damn' is often used, but the men do not associate it with God. It is merely an expression of irritation, like the Yorkshire 'drat it.' We must compare the language of to-day with the language of the past to realize the new reverence for God's name which has come into the Army. The old language lingers in some of the drill instructors, but even these feel that they lack appreciative audiences. Slang and vulgarity are common, but these are matters of artistic taste rather than of morals. There is, however, one unclean word for which, an interpreter informs me, the French have no equivalent. The French are saved from it by their superior delicacy of mind. Our Tommies used it in civil life, and they use it even more in camp life. The only saving thing about the habit is that the men use the word without, as a rule, the slightest thought of its meaning. On the other hand, if they did think of its meaning, they would cease to use it, for their general conversation is not lewd. The language at the Front is not very refined, for we are not an artistic people, but we are a moral and religious

people, and there is very little blasphemy in the speech of our soldiers. The excision of five or six words would make an enormous improvement.

There is a considerable amount of gambling at the Front, but not more, I think, than in civil life—perhaps not so much. It must not be forgotten that here life is in the open. There are no doors or blinds to hide vice as in civil life. No doubt many youths have been exposed to temptations they would have escaped at home, and some have yielded to them. But, on the other hand, many are infinitely stronger and nobler through their life here. They came out boys in body and soul, and they will go back men.

Alas, I have not spoken of Tommy's real morals at all, but only of four of his negative virtues, and a man might have all these and still be a thoroughly bad man, bad as a Pharisee. But who can speak adequately of his positive virtues? Think of his fine comradeship. In the fighting of this week a soldier told me that he saw a dead officer and a dead sergeant in a shell-hole, and their arms were clasped round one another's necks. Think of Tommy's courage, fortitude, cheerfulness, self-denial, generosity, honesty, loyalty, obedience, and forgiving spirit. Think of his love of duty, home, and

country. I have seen our Tommies live, and suffer, and die. They are *men,* and I never receive a salute from one of them but I give an equally respectful one in return.

XIII

TOMMY'S IDEA OF THE CHURCHES

I REMEMBER, some years ago, knocking at a door in the East End and inviting the man who opened it to attend the services of our church. 'I shall *not* attend the services,' he replied bluntly; 'we do not need the church, and we are as good as the people who go to church.' It was rather rude of him, and I was inclined to put him down as having a double dose of original sin, besides much that he had acquired. The idea of thinking that the people outside the Churches were as good as the people in them! I was surprised. We have assumed that we are better. We have taken it for granted. We ought to be; but are we? My neighbour said 'No.' He knew our claim to be better, but he would not admit the claim, and regarded it as an impertinence. Now, after nine months at the Front, I have been forced to the conclusion that the average man in the Army agrees with the man in the street. It is easy to put down his lack of appreciation to sin. We can say that

he savours not the things of God; that he lacks spirituality; is worldly minded; and irks putting a restraint upon his lusts.

Such an assumption is easy. It gives us a fine feeling of superiority, such as the Pharisees possessed. But the assumption is dangerous. It is in morals what arguing in a circle is in dialectics. We become the victims of our own assumptions. If we *were* better, would it not be obvious? Would any one deny it? Has any one ever claimed to be as good as Christ? I forget whether Mr. Bernard Shaw has or not. Probably he has, for he will claim anything to make the multitude wonder how he got his feet where his head ought to be. But, intellectual shockers apart, did ever any one claim to be 'as good as' Christ? If the average man is blinded by sin, how does he realize that Christ was good? The New Testament teaches us that Christ is the Head, and the Church His body. But the man in the Army, having looked at both, declares the Head to be of gold and the feet of clay. If, spiritually, he is too blind to distinguish the metal of which the feet are made, how does he manage to distinguish that the Head is of pure gold? We do not get rid of his judgment of us by giving him the rejoinder of the Pharisees, 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?' 'The heart of man

is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,' and no doubt he has his share of its evil, but are not our hearts the hearts of men? And may they not be deceiving us? If we claim that God has given us a 'new heart,' is our neighbour wrong in asking for proofs? Likeness to Christ is the only acceptable proof, and, in the judgment of the outsider, whatever it is worth, we are like Christ only as clay is like gold.

It is a pity that we have claimed to be better than those outside the Churches. Are we not pitching our tents rather near the camp of the Pharisees? Does the sun need to *tell* us that it is brighter than the moon? It is a pity that we have even thought of our goodness. A goodness that thinks of itself is suspect. Can a man be humble and know it? Only an egotist thinks how humble he is. Goodness is like health. It never thinks of itself. The pure in heart cannot know they are pure for impurity is hidden from them as purity is hidden from the wicked. There is a veil. They only know they 'see God.' A man is as unconscious of his goodness as a rose of its perfume. In Christ's account of the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv.) the only people who thought they were good were the bad people. 'Lord,' they say, 'when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or

naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?' But the good people were astounded at the news that they had been good. 'Lord,' they asked, 'when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee?'

We ought to know we are lovers of Christ as surely as we know we are lovers of our wives, but we ought not to know we are good followers of Christ any more than we ought to know we are good husbands. The wife needs to be pitied whose husband knows he is a good husband. Her heart is probably very near to breaking. The husband who is truly good doesn't know it. He thinks himself utterly unworthy of his wife, and wonders what she sees in him to love. Moral goodness has the same unconsciousness. The Pharisees thought they were good, and Christ told them they were worse than the drunkards and harlots. This was no hyperbole. We who profess to be religious ought to read at least once a month, very carefully and honestly, Matt. xxiii. And it would be much more to the point if, instead of painting the Ten Commandments over the communion table, or behind the pulpit, we were to paint there some of these terrible words of

Christ. Our temptations are more subtle than those we are put on our guard against in the Ten Commandments. A man cannot drift into murder without knowing it, but he can into self-righteousness. The rich young ruler had kept the Ten Commandments from his youth up, but he was not great enough to be a Christian. He did not know it was so hard to follow Christ, and he went away sorrowful. We don't go away sorrowful; we go to church instead, and think *that* is being a Christian. There will be a rude awakening for some of us some day. It will not be a rude neighbour from the slums who will tell us we are no better than the people outside the Churches. It will be Christ. Had we not better, while there is time, listen to the voice of this man of the street? He is unordained, and wears no white collar or black coat. His manners are not the best, nor his language the purest, but he speaks with the sting and boldness of a prophet.

Much of the preaching of the last fifty years has been on the theory of salvation, and an unexpected thing has happened. We have, almost unconsciously, come to think that holding the *correct theory of how* God saves us, combined with attending the services, and living a respectable life—such as not drinking, not swearing, not gambling, and a lot of other 'nots'—

is being a Christian, and doing all that is required of us. The argumentative style of St. Paul has rather overshadowed the more terrible simplicity and fiercer challenge of Christ's teaching. We have recoiled before the awful simplicity and reality of Christ's words, and have found a sort of dug-out with St. Paul. We have got our texts from him, and have used them for debates about the correct and incorrect theories held by men in relation to the Atonement, the Sacraments, and the Church. No man of sense will say that theories are of no consequence, and that a man can think what he likes if only he acts rightly. Men cannot think wrongly and act rightly for long. But we have overdone the theory part, and we have forgotten that just as right thinking assists us to right acting, so right acting assists us to right thinking. 'If any man will *do* His will he shall *know* of the doctrine.' When Newton saw the apple fall he pondered on the law by which it fell, but he probably also picked it up and took it to the cook. There are household questions as well as cosmic questions to be solved. Theory, alone, leads to sterility. The farmer must sow as well as think. We have given to our people, and to the world, the impression that a Christian is a man who holds correct views of Christian doctrine, and abstains

from evil. He is a man who thinks this and that, and does *not* do this and the other. We did not mean to give such an impression. It is due to wrong emphasis. We have emphasized the negative virtues rather than the positive, and right thinking rather than right acting. In other words, we have taken the line of least resistance, and sent few away sorrowful at the greatness of our demands. We are known by what we *don't* believe and *don't* do, rather than by what we *do* believe, and *do*. Is what we don't do more impressive than what we do? 'What do ye more than others?' comes the stinging question.

I was in an officers' mess some time ago, and they were discussing a new arrival. One of them said, 'He is very quiet; he doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, doesn't play bridge, and doesn't swear.' 'He must be religious,' concluded another. That is it. The words were not spoken in malice. It is the conception of a Christian that we have given them. If the new officer had been described as cheerful, generous, hospitable, and brave, they would not have concluded that he must be religious. Yet which description is the more like Christ? How brave, cheerful, generous, and hospitable Christ was! He was the soul of chivalry. No virtue had been associated with the new officer that a

swindler and criminal might not possess, yet he had at once been classified as a Christian. But men possessing the cardinal Christian virtues of charity, humility, joy, generosity, hospitality, hope, courage, and self-sacrifice are not classified as Christians, but merely as 'good fellows.' They are 'white men.' These 'white men' may be in the Church or out of it. There is, in the popular mind, no necessary connexion. That is the tragedy of the Church. Well may we ask, 'What is wrong with the Church?'

XIV

THE CHIVALROUS RELIGION OUR CITIZEN SOLDIERS WILL REQUIRE

SURELY with our non-drinking, non-smoking, non-swearing, non-gambling, and our attendance at the Church, we are but on the outskirts both of morals and religion! It is not what a man doesn't do that marks him off as a Christian. It is what he does and is. The Christian characteristics stand out plainly in the Gospels. Love is the virtue of virtues. 'God is love.' 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' 'Thou shalt love' is Christ's summary of Christianity. St. Paul also places love on the pinnacle: 'Faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity.' Charity is the mother and nurse of goodness. The first test, therefore, of a Christian is, 'Has he charity? Does he love?' It is also the first test of the Church. 'Does the Church love? Has it charity?' The soldier knows that Christianity is love. In

the Citadel Cemetery on the Somme I saw this inscription on a white cross:

No. 4878, Pte. S. Williams,
2nd R. War. R.
Killed in Action,
3-6-1916.
'Greater love hath no man.'
He died to save another.

Does the Church love? Does it die to save others, as did its Master? I have lived five long years in the East End of London, and have walked by night and day through its miles of stinking streets, where the poor are housed worse than the rich man's horses. The pale, thin faces of the children haunt me as the horrible sights on the Somme will never haunt me, for a ragged, starving child is more terrible to think of than a youth blown to fragments or lying on a stretcher in mortal agony. The tragedy is deeper and more enduring. I have a stray dog here; to-night I offered her buttered toast, and she declined it. But where in the East End is the child that would turn away from buttered toast? When, at Christmas, we gave them bread, spread with jam, and cheap cake, they stuffed themselves like ravenous wolves, and then, by stealth, hid what they could under their clothing. Think of their poor

bodies and poorer souls, and of the dark way before them! In face of this massacre of innocents, infinitely greater than Herod's, what does the Church do? She washes her hands, like Pilate before the murder of Christ. 'The poverty of the poor,' we say complacently, 'is due to their drinking habits and thriftlessness.' The libel stifles the clamour of our consciences, and so we hug it to our hearts. Many of the poorest never touch drink, and many of the thriftiest are starving. Thrift? Thrift is a fine art taught by mother to daughter from generation to generation. How can a woman practise it in one or two rooms without an oven, boiler, or cupboard? If we had cared two pins for the poor we should have gone to see them, and if we had seen them in their rooms we should have been incapable of talking such drivel. Drink? Many who drink were predisposed to it by ill-feeding and misery. As one of the poor women said, 'To get drunk is the only way to get out of Whitechapel.' Drink is the only morphia for their pain, a wild attempt to forget their misery. But if, as we pretend, drink has made Whitechapel, Stepney, Shoreditch, Poplar, and Bow Common, what have we done to the *drink?* The Church was horrified at the sinking of the *Lusitania,* and denounced the perpetrators, but it is not horrified at the sight of thousands of

men, women, and children drowning in a darker and deeper sea.

Does the Church love? When a mother loves, though she be a queen, she becomes interested in soap and water, sheets and blankets, boots and clothing, and many other mundane things. And when the Church loves she will have something to say about rents and wages, houses and workshops, food and clothing, gardens, drains, medicine, and many other things. Where is the Church's mother-love? Where is her fierce mother-wrath as she sees the children trampled in the mire? It is easy to go to church, and to abstain from drinking, swearing, and gambling, but it is not easy to love. Love brings labour, and sorrow and self-sacrifice. Love sometimes says, 'Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' This is not like going to a home missionary meeting and giving the price of a meal to the collection. It is leaving beautiful houses, and pictures, and gardens, and music, and going into mean streets and dirty dwellings. It is leaving congenial friends and joyous fellowships for service among the unfortunate, unattractive, and, perhaps, depraved. It is giving where you cannot hope to receive in return. There is the sweat of heart and of brain, the carrying of

sicknesses and sorrows. To your own cares and troubles there is added the unspeakable trouble of the multitude.

'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?' It is much harder than being a teetotaller, or going to services, or paying other people to live and work among the poor. To those who treasure the beauty of the fields, the sky, the drawing-room, and places where music and charm linger, it is not easy to follow Christ into mean streets to minister to the aged, sick, blind, or starving. It is not easy to turn on the oppressors of the poor, and in hot, pure anger scourge them as Christ scourged the money-changers in the temple. If Christians but loved, vast stretches of poverty would cease to exist, and the reproach which we have brought on Christianity would be lifted. But we 'pass by on the other side,' and leave the wounded and robbed to be cared for and defended by others who name not the Name.

Humility is the sister of Charity, and they are never far one from the other. The Church's lack of love has made the East End possible, and her lack of humility the West End. Christ opened His Sermon on the Mount with humility. It was placed as the gate to the kingdom of God. Humility does not mean timidity or lack of spirit. History reveals no

courage so fearless as the courage of the humble. It does not mean 'ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters.' It does not need Christianity to teach us that. A contemptible thing like snobbery can do it, and do it much better than Christianity. The labourer bows before the farmer, the farmer before the squire, the squire before the baron, the baron before the duke, the duke before the king; and yet every one of them may be as proud as Lucifer, and as far from humility as darkness from light. When popes had temporal power, even kings kissed their toes, but it had nothing to do with humility.

Humility is ordering ourselves lowly and reverently before our *inferiors*. When Christ, the King of heaven, chose fishermen to be His companions, He was humble; and when He washed their feet He gave us the supreme example of humility. It was largely because of His humility that the proud Pharisees hated Him. 'Here,' they said, 'is a rabbi as much the darling of the mob as a mountebank. He has "no respect for the cloth," and is "lowering religion" in the popular estimation. He feeds the multitude like a baker, and brings fishes into Peter's net like a catchpenny. He opens men's eyes with clay like a quack-doctor. He associates freely with drunkards and harlots. He

is a "wine-bibber," for "birds of a feather flock together." He has not the dignity proper to a rabbi. He went into a respectable man's house, like Simon's, and had no more respect for Himself, or His host, than to let "a woman in the city, which was a sinner, wash His feet with tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head." When Christ came to wash His disciples' feet, even Peter rebuked Him. Peter thought his Master had not a proper opinion of Himself.

Humility is compact of spiritual insight, wonder, and compassion. It cannot look on even fallen human nature without reverence. Man is God's temple, and however battered and dilapidated it may be, when we stand before it we are standing on holy ground. A snob is lowly only before his social 'betters,' but a true Christian is lowly before a beggar or a drunkard. I have been in many a shattered church on the Front, and they fill me with not less awe than the churches out of danger. So with a fallen soul. It is still God's temple, and the ruin that has come upon it ought to make us the more reverent. This soul has been in the firing-line. The soul is as I might have been. Some day God's hands may rebuild it, and make it more glorious than before its fall. Before the fallen souls of men Christ stood reverently,

and, loving them, died for them. He would forgive men seventy-times seven, and turn none away. Even the woman taken in adultery He would not give over to the stoning. 'Go, and sin no more,' He said. Without a trace of condescension He mingled with the poorest and the most sinful. What is, perhaps, more, He mingled with the rich and the proud without a touch of self-consciousness. Rich or poor, all were the temples of God, and He regarded them with reverence and love.

Where is the Church's humility? We cannot even leave our ostentation outside the church door and kneel as brothers at the throne of grace. When a stranger comes into our pew, do we feel honoured? Do we feel that our pew has been made the trysting-place for a soul and God?

But there are deeper tragedies that spring from our pride. An innocent, trusting girl, or it may be a wild, wilful girl, gets into trouble. The man deserts her, and she is overwhelmed with shame and sorrow. Her parents are supposed to be Christians, but do they act as Christ would act? She has been forsaken. Her hope of happiness, and honour, and home has perished like the flowers of spring. Her conscience is outraged, and she cannot still its voice. Her intelligence rebukes her for ignorance and folly.

Her heart cries out against her for having brought sorrow and shame upon her loved ones. Her imagination turns against her with terrible visions of the Valley of Pain through which she must pass. She is weak, ill, and beside herself. She needs a father's forgiveness, counsel, and protection. She needs a mother's love, sympathy, and understanding. What often happens? Her Christian parents turn her out of doors, or 'go on at her' till home becomes unbearable, and she flees from it. Her condition, or lack of training, prevents her from getting work. Friends and neighbors cannot be expected to shelter one whom parents turn adrift. What becomes of her? It is not the parents' purity that dooms her to a life of sin and shame; it is the parents' pride. She has brought disgrace on an honoured name, and by turning her out of the home they will show the world how they abhor such conduct. Yet they call themselves followers of Christ, who refused to give a worse woman to be stoned—a milder fate. Christ saved these women. The Church cannot. Why? Because it is not like Him.

The West End and the East End are the measure of the Church's failure. They are standing proofs of a deficiency of chivalry in the Church; and a Church without chivalry will never appeal to the men who have, time with-

out number, risked their lives for others on the Somme and elsewhere. There can be no religion of chivalry without humility and love as the dominant notes; and for these cardinal virtues we must go back to the Gospels, and study the teaching, life, and death of Christ. Meanwhile, the majority of men in our heroic citizen Army stand outside our sanctuaries. They are waiting for us to manifest the heroism and grandeur of the Christianity of Christ. This high demand is really the finest possible tribute to the formative and all-persuasive influence of the Church in the era that has now closed. We have, by making known the example and teaching of Christ, raised the standard of public opinion and expectation. We have spread abroad a new Christian idealism, and it is by this that we are being judged. Things that were passable in days gone by are intolerable now. Slums are now a reproach to Christianity; but in the old days they were regarded as the natural products of life, and as much to be expected as rain and frost. The poor existed for the development of charity in the rich. To a degree hitherto unknown the Church has succeeded in leavening politics, journalism, literature, and social organizations with the ideas of Christianity. The standards of life and thought outside the Church have therefore

risen, and the Church can only keep its leadership by a closer following of Christ. The moral greatness of our citizen Army is at once a tribute and a challenge to the Church. The Christian conception of life and conduct has been generally accepted as the ideal, and we have to make it the real. Christian conduct must no longer be merely conventional. It must be creative. There is a call for spiritual daring and adventure. As St. Paul christianized Greece and Rome, so we must christianize industry and politics and abolish poverty and vice. To abstain from evil is not enough; we must adventure as Wesley, Dr. Barnardo, and Florence Nightingale adventured. We have made our doctrines known; now we must experiment, and show how they may be applied in communal life. The monastic ideal has prevailed too long, and we have been too content with conserving and fencing-in our religious life. We must leave our hermit cells and go abroad into every department of life to make it Christian. We need spiritual pioneers, investigators, and discoverers—men who will experiment in the application of Christianity to our complex social life. The Church must convert Christian thought into Christian action, and teach in deeds what it has already taught in doctrine. Our soldiers are not hostile to the Church. They are disap-

pointed with it. They look for a leadership they do not receive, and turn away more in sorrow than in anger. After the War the Church will have a new and supreme opportunity—the finest history has provided. But it must prepare for it; and the only adequate preparation is a fresh study of the life and teaching of Christ. This must be free from both prejudice and cowardice. We must neither twist His words nor water down His teaching. We must obey His commands as a private obeys his captain, no matter where they may lead, or what sacrifices they may involve. The cultivation of such creative virtues as humility and charity, accompanied by absolute loyalty to the teachings of the Gospels, would give the Church the undisputed leadership of the world. Our soldiers go to mutilation and death at the word of a second-lieutenant. Shall we shrink from an equal loyalty to Christ? Without such obedience there can be no leadership for the Church, and she will fail to win the allegiance of our chivalrous soldiers. As England took its stand by the side of Belgium, so the Church must take its stand by the poor and weak and fallen. Every one knew where to look for Christ; and when the Church is found following in His steps and performing the same acts of chivalry, there will be a glorious rally to her flag. The Church must

lure the brave and noble as the court of King Arthur lured the knights of old, and they must be encouraged to sally forth redressing wrongs, protecting virtue, and delivering the oppressed.

XV

THE UNTOUCHED CROSS

I WAS visiting some of my men in a neighbouring village on the line. It is indeed a 'deserted village.' Long ago the civilians were driven out, and there is not a house that is not torn with shells. The fields around have run to waste, and, as they have no hedges, they look like a prairie. The road is almost deserted in the daytime, and the only living things to be seen are gunners dwelling in the ground like rabbits, and appearing in the open from time to time. Overhead was spread the vast impassive sky—a calm ocean of blue studded with innumerable islands of pure white cloud. There was no sound but the sound of the guns, and, looking up at the beautiful sky, it was hard to realize that one was cycling over the plain of death, and that it would be well to make haste. Nature seemed to be in one of her mocking moods —a woman with an angel's face and a devil's heart, luring one to destruction amid scenes of innocence.

I was visiting men who the previous Saturday had, from the neighbouring village, flung themselves over the parapet, and through three curtains of fire had charged down upon the enemy. The survivors of that fiery blast were now in this shattered village, or in the adjoining trenches, now flooded to the waist by the previous day's thunderstorm. I arranged for a service on the coming Lord's Day, and afterwards visited the men in their billets and dug-outs. Then, drawn from my path as one would be by the sight of a wounded man, I turned towards the ruined church. For three centuries it had stood the storms of nature and the ravages of war, but it had bowed its noble head before the fiery blast of this War. I dared not enter by the front door, for half the steeple had gone, and the other half stood like an old man trying to straighten himself, and ready to fall at any moment. The graveyard was waist-deep with weeds and grasses. The gravestones were shattered with shells. The outside walls of the church were pitted with shrapnel, and the windows were blown into fragments. I clambered over heaps of stones and through long grasses to the farther side, and entered through the doorless doorway. A ghastlier sight never met the eyes of Jeremiah. The roof had fallen through, and the white clouds looked down upon

the débris. The floor could not be seen for fallen stones. The figures of saints had been blown to fragments. I picked up the crown of one, and laid it down again. There was a golden star on the brow, but the gold was dim. I picked up fragments of shell, and, walking round the walls, I picked shrapnel bullets out of the plaster. Nothing had escaped. Not a yard. The walls were pitted with shrapnel like a man with small-pox.

I had walked round three parts of the church, and was looking at the rubbish on the floor, when suddenly something caught my attention, and I looked up. The sight startled me, for somehow it had escaped me as I had glanced round the church on entering from the other side. There before me stood a large wooden cross fastened against the wall, and bearing, nailed upon it, a life-sized figure of the Saviour. It stood intact—the one thing in the church undamaged and untouched. The altar had gone, the saints had gone, the roof and the windows had gone, the chairs had gone—all had gone save Jesus only. The worshippers had fled, but He remained. The church was in ruins about Him, but He was untouched. It was an awesome sight amid that scene of desolation. Amid the fiery blast of bullets He had remained with arms outstretched interceding with God

for a ruined world. And no bullet had touched Him. There was not a mark on his body. The priest, when he had seen the warning finger writing upon the wall, had taken away the church treasures, but, with sure religious instinct, he had left the crucifix, which he revered most of all. He would not touch *that*. Christ would be His own protector, and bear the full blast of the world's malignity in His own strength. He needed not the poor device of man. And amid the awful hail of shells and falling masonry nothing touched Him. A few minutes later I stood outside, looking at the steeple and speaking with a passing soldier.

'It is a strange thing,' he said, 'that the crucifix inside should have remained untouched through it all.'

Strange indeed! The clock in the steeple was still and in ruins. No more would it use its hands in dumb show to speak to the people below. It was the symbol of time and all things earthly, and the shells had destroyed it. But the crucifix was the symbol of the Eternal, and of the Undying Love which no shell can touch. In all that deserted village the crucifix alone stands untouched. Even the iron finger-posts were smashed and lying in the mud beside the road. The villagers have nothing left but the cross. It alone has borne the blast. It alone

will give them welcome when they return. Their homes are in ruins, and their fields are waste. Even their church and the graveyard of their dead are a heap of ruins. But there are two arms outstretched still to bid them welcome.

Like that blasted village and ruined church, the world of our thought and feeling lies a heap of ruins about our feet. When victory and peace come, who will have heart left to ring the bells or put out the flags? We have buried our heart's love in a strange land, and the city of our dreams is a heap. The very finger-posts are broken. What can we do when the excitement of the War is over but return to the ruins of our former life and weep over them? Our wasted fields we can plough afresh and sow. We do not mind being poor. But our homes! God help us when the boys for whom we have kept the home fires burning come not back, and when the father asks the children to spread out wider at the table that the gap break not the mother's heart. Our churches, too, how shall we find them? Will the War have shattered our Church life? Who can tell? Our businesses, our homes, our churches, all will have changed. The mark of the shell will be on them all. Where shall we turn then to the unchanged and unchangeable?

In the midst of our fallen civilization the Cross stands untouched. Christ has stood in the midst of the fiery blast with outstretched arms calling the stricken peoples to the shelter of His love. His arms are outstretched still, and there is room for the world between them. Broken business men, bereaved parents, lonely maidens, fatherless children, there are shelter and solace for all beneath the shadow of the abiding cross. It towers above the wrecks of time. If that had gone all had gone. We could not have replaced the cross. We can build new churches, new homes, and new businesses, but not a new cross. If the Saviour had perished, all had perished. If it had not been for the vision of Him I should have gone out of the advanced dressing-station and wept when, on that Saturday, I saw the wounded come back to us in such numbers that they had to lie down by the wayside and wait for us to deal with the worst cases first. I had seen them march out singing a few hours before, and to see them come in wounded so soon after would have broken me down had I not seen a vision of Christ broken on the cross and saving the world by His bleeding wounds and cruel death. Well I knew that the lads who had gone over the parapet to their death had seen through the hail of bullets and shells the vision of the crucified Christ welcoming

them with outstretched arms. After the last Sacrament before the battle one of them said to me, 'If I fall, write and tell mother that I died trusting in Christ and at perfect peace.' The old world lies in ruins at our feet, but the cross stands untouched, and we shall build our new and better civilization round the cross.

XVI

THE BELLS OF MAUREPAS

IT was the 'Tanks' day out. We had made their acquaintance some weeks before. In a quiet place well behind the line our division and the 'Tanks' had gone through a rehearsal together. We had, metaphorically speaking, been allowed to look up the conjurer's sleeve before the show began, and were pledged to secrecy. But the day had now come for Sir Douglas Haig to play his trick on the enemy, and he emptied his sleeve with a vengeance. We had watched the monsters assembling for some days, and one night, when lost, I had been guided as to my whereabouts by the clack, clack of a 'Tank,' and had been entertained to supper in the 'Tank' officers' tent. While the 'Tanks' were going over the parapet and unconcernedly shuffling across 'No Man's Land,' belching forth fire and smoke, I was searching for one of my regiments. It was not in the battle, but in a reserve trench with the rest of the division, awaiting eventualities.

Even guides go astray on the Somme, and there I soon found that I had a genius for getting lost. If there are two tracks (and there are twenty-two, or more) I almost inevitably take the wrong one. On this day I was thoroughly lost, and coming upon a sergeant who was sheltering his ammunition wagons behind a low hill, and allowing them to go to the guns but one at a time, I asked the way. He was a very intelligent man, and spoke with confidence. I had to continue the road into the valley, climb the hill on the other side, and a few hundred yards beyond the crest I should find the regiment. Of course, he was mistaken. They always are.

When lost on the Somme one should never ask the way. It is better to grope for it if you cannot find an officer with a map. Tell a Tommy where he has to go, and by some mystic method he inevitably arrives there, but he neither knows nor cares what lies a yard beyond or to the right or left of him. His work-a-day philosophy seems to be, 'One step I see before me. 'Tis all I need to see.' There is something uncanny in his superb indifference to all that lies outside his own well-defined duty. Yet, when you are lost, he, in the largeness of his heart, takes pity on you. He will not confess his absolute ignorance, for that would make you feel more lost than ever. He therefore guesses,

and guesses wrong, as you afterwards find out. In the teeth of all former experience I trusted the sergeant's directions. On the other side of the valley I passed through the French batteries. The gunners joyfully informed me that the English were advancing, and bade me look through their glasses at the smoke-enveloped battle-line, and at the cavalry in the rear. The French were more excited and joyful than Englishmen would be even if they were beholding the German Army jumping into the Rhine in the wholesale manner of the Pied Piper of Hamelin's rats. At last I reached the hill-top, and found to my amazement that I was in Maurepas, the village next to Combles. I tried to make a French officer understand where I wanted to go, but he seemed to regard me as a trophy—perhaps a spy—and asked me to follow him to the commander of the division. There I found an English major acting as liaison-officer. He introduced me to the general, and explained that I was a curé. They were watching the battle, and the major explained to me the points already won. The smoke of battle obscured the view, but under its pall the English Prime Minister's eldest son was dying, and many another of Britain's best. The major showed me the neighbourhood of our trench, and I made my way back into the

valley. There I left the road and cut across country, taking cover where I could. In this way I reached the regiment quickly.

At Maurepas I was amazed at the destruction that had been wrought. It was a heap. There was not a house or shed left standing. The tallest bit of wall left was not more than a yard high. Broken ploughs and reapers mingled with household utensils in indescribable confusion. On the left of the road, as I returned, was the site where the church had stood. I needed no informant, for there, like two huge pears, stood the church bells. They were about five feet in height, and of great weight. They were lying exactly as they had fallen when the steeple tumbled down. Of the church itself nothing remained, and but for the bells I should never have known anything of its existence. The sparing of the bells was another of the strange freaks of war. The church had gone, but its music lingered.

In peace time, the music of the bells had floated out over the rolling downs and through the sleeping valleys that lie around the village. As the people ploughed the land, gathered in the corn, or tended their stock, the sound of the bells came to them as a voice from heaven. Daily, like the peasants in Millet's picture, 'The Angelus,' they had, at the call of the bells,

bowed their heads and said an evening prayer ere the passing of the sun brought on the night, with its train of stars. On the first day of each new week they had left their fields at the sound of the music, and, donning their best garb, had sought in the church the absolution of their sins, and a fresh start. Mothers looking on the picture of the Virgin and Child had felt a new sacredness in the duties of motherhood. Fathers had gazed upon the crucifix and become reconciled to a life of self-renouncing labour for their offspring. Children, with wondering eyes, had looked upon the picture of the angels surrounding the ascending Lord, and felt the power and glory of the world to come. All had listened to the simple words of the village priest, and been reminded that they were but pilgrims, and must not set their affections too deeply on farmstead or field, but on the things which are eternal and beyond the chances and changes of this mortal life. When Christmas had come the bells had rung merrily, calling to the farmers as aforetime the angels of Bethlehem had called to the shepherds, 'O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.' Holy days had come and gone, but never without the bells calling the people from the toil of the fields to rest and rejoicings in home and church. When the children went to their first communion, or when the

church's blessing was given to a bridal pair, how happily the bells rang! And how sadly when some old man finished his journey and went to his long home! Back home old people and young children often die without any notice being taken of their passing. They just slip away like the birds in autumn. But in the district around Maurepas neither man nor child could pass away unnoticed and unlamented. The bells tolled the news to all, and expressed the sorrow of all. Now the church in which the old and young had prayed, bridal parties rejoiced, and mourners wept, was no more. Only the bells remained. But as

> Music, when soft voices die,
> Vibrates in the memory,

so there abide the spiritual experiences to which the bells called.

Our army in France is cut off from its churches as completely as if they had been destroyed. Yet the music of the church lingers in our memories. 'We don't like parades in which we are marched to and from the services,' said a youth to me; 'we like to walk to the services of our own freewill just as we did at home.' It is all 'home.' They want the same order of service, and the same hymns and tunes as at home. They want nothing new. They

are the old things and the familiar portions of Scripture which content them. Life is too uncertain for new things. They just hold on to the old. 'How nice it will be,' wrote one in a letter I censored, 'to be back in my old place in the choir.' The music of the sanctuary vibrates in their memory, and they share the feelings of the Psalmist as he wrote, 'When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.' After Holy Communion in a barn a Presbyterian officer came to me and said, 'It is a great happiness to have received the Sacrament this morning, because I am to-day being received into the membership of our church at home, and my heart is there.' A little while back some fifty men came to a service in the corner of a field. At the close I asked all who wished to consecrate themselves to God to step forward and seal the covenant by partaking of the Sacrament. And all stepped forward. I have no doubt that every one of them was an old Sunday-school scholar. They responded to my appeal because the music of the old Sunday-school teachers' voices was still ringing in their hearts. Once I stood in Bishopsgate Street, London, watching the traffic, and listening to

its roar. Soon, however, I found myself listening to another voice. It came from above, and was heard through the tumult of the street. It was the voice of the bells of Bishopsgate church, and they were singing to the busy and overladen passers-by Sullivan's sweet melody, 'Lead, Kindly Light.' So here amid the horror and tumult of war, the sweet voice of the church 'which we have loved long since and lost awhile,' comes to our hearts with healing power. One of our men told me that while out with a burial party he found in a shell-hole the body of a soldier who had died of wounds. In his hands was a Bible, and it lay open at the twenty-third Psalm. He had learned the Psalm at his mother's knee or in the Sunday school, and often he had heard it in church. Dying there alone in a shell-hole, with the battle raging round him, the old familiar Psalm came back to his memory like the sound of distant bells. It was one of

> Those first affections,
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal silence; truths that wake,
> To perish never;

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man, nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy.

The dying soldier was a boy again, and the battle was forgotten as he sank to rest in the arms of God. Out here we have to live on our memories, and draw upon the reserves we unconsciously laid by when children. Thus

The thought of our past years in us doth breed
Perpetual benediction.

I have seen an officer in mid-years almost break down in tears because I casually quoted the children's hymn:

Now the day is over,
Night is drawing nigh,
Shadows of the evening
Steal across the sky.

It appeared that for several years his mother had repeated the hymn to him every evening. In the hour of danger and death, or when the spirit is lonely, these things come back on us. It is the lingering music from the church of our childhood. Even Napoleon, Bourrienne tells us, wept one evening when he heard the bells of a village church. They reminded him too vividly of a little church in Corsica which he had at-

tended when a boy. The churches of our childhood may be destroyed, but not their music. The bells will still linger among the ruins.

Some day new houses and a new church will be built at Maurepas, but they are the old bells that will ring in the steeple. They will be the link between the old and the new. The war cannot silence them for ever, and after its tumult, as before it, the bells will call the tillers of the ground to worship Him who is, '*from* everlasting *to* everlasting God.' And when we come back to the home-land and the new Church, it is the old Bible and the old hymns that we shall want to hear. We shall listen for the old bells whose music came to us in a strange land and in valleys deeply shadowed. And we shall want to worship the adorable One who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' for in the land of our journeyings the music of His voice has never failed us.

XVII

THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF MONTAUBAN

I WAS riding on a motor-lorry from Guillemont (where Raymond Asquith lies buried) to Carnoy; and it was evening. As we passed through Montauban I saw a strange sight on the right of the road. Poised, so it seemed, in mid-air, and about six feet from the ground, was a figure in white. 'What can that be?' I asked. In the twilight it looked like a ghost. Around the figure I could just discern a number of broken tombstones. And on each side of the road I knew there were many soldiers buried. Was it a spirit, some ancient cottager, revisiting the desolated village? Or could it be the ghost of some soldier? Surely not, for none ever sought a return to the Somme. Yet who could set a limit to the devotion of one who had died for his country? Might he not return to encourage the lads who were marching up to the trenches with fear and foreboding gripping at their hearts? Had not Moses and Elias re-

turned to comfort and strengthen Jesus ere He left the Mount of Transfiguration for Calvary? Or was it some mother who could not rest in heaven while her boy took that terrifying road to Lesbeufs? Jesus had to come to us from heaven when we wandered in the wilderness of sin and suffering, and how often the angels have come to man in his need we shall never know. The Bible tells us of a few visits, but not of all. If the figure had been the sainted mother of one of the boys marching by, I do not think it would have given me much surprise; for I am sure heaven is ever very near us, and that there is no lock on the door to prevent a mother ministering to her boy when, in the hideous darkness that seems alive with shrieking fiends, his young heart beats against his ribs as though it would escape from the unspeakable horror. Or was the white figure some wife or mother from England? Had one left her sleeping body and slipped away to her love on the Somme? Where are we when our bodies sleep? What are our souls doing? Can love find out no way for the soul to escape from its prison house of flesh for a fleeting visit over the sea? I have seen so many dead that I have come to think of lifeless bodies as I think of deserted houses. The owners have not ceased to exist. They have merely gone away. And when the body is not dead but

asleep, may it not be possible for the soul to lock up the house for a time and slip away? We are 'fearfully and wonderfully made,' and live in a world where the spiritual is more potent than the material. We know not what is possible either to the living or to those we pronounce dead.

As I sped past the figure I questioned what it could be; but there was none to answer. When Jesus came to His disciples walking on the sea, they thought He was a ghost, and were afraid. After the resurrection He came to them when the doors were closed, and in other mysterious ways, and they were amazed, but not afraid. Could this figure be Christ? Even after his ascension he appeared to St. Paul. Might He not, in our hour of need, be appearing to us? We know that He is on the Somme as truly as we know the Prince of Wales is. A friend of mine, a cyclist orderly, told me that one day when he dismounted he found the Princes of Wales close beside him scraping the mud from a bicycle. The Prince has camped with his regiment close to my own, and a number of our men have seen him go by on his bicycle. It is almost certain that at one time or another I have passed him on the road, but because I was not expecting to see him, or because I did not realize how like an ordinary

man a true and gallant prince can be, I have not recognized him. In like manner many have failed to realize the presence of Christ; but that He is on the Somme is proved by many testimonies. He has revealed Himself to men in their need, and ministered to them. Was this figure a manifestation of Him that none might doubt? Had He remembered the way of the Cross and come to cheer the brave soldiers as they went by to die? Was He holding a review of those who follow in His train?

Any of these surmisings I believed possible as an explanation of the figure, and yet I regarded none of them as probable, for of human life beyond the body we have but little assured knowledge, and are almost entirely in the realm of faith, hope, and love. And in regard to the Divine Figure, we have not seen Him with mortal eyes.

The day following I had to walk to Guillemont, and as I passed through Montauban I suddenly came upon the figure again. The road was crowded with traffic, yet never a soldier passed without turning to look at this watcher by the wayside. By night and day multitudes have gazed upon it with astonished eyes. It is all that is left of Montauban. There is not a house nor barn standing, and of the church there is not one stone upon another.

This figure, the figure of the Virgin Mary, is all that the War has spared. It is but a plaster cast resting on a slightly built trestle, and, seen by daylight, is in the traditional colours. Under the trestle lie two 'duds'—shells that have failed to explode. One is of the usual size, but the other is an immense fifteen-inch shell. The statue is slightly damaged at the back, but this is hardly noticeable. It had evidently been in the church, but how every building of brick and stone could be utterly destroyed by shell fire, and a statue of plaster be preserved, passes the wit of man. The Virgin stands above the open graves and broken tombstones, gazing with downcast eyes towards the road where the soldiers go marching by. Her hands are slightly extended in front of her as though in lamentation. She stands like Rachel weeping for her children.

There is not a living woman within many miles of Montauban. There is just this plaster statue of one. She has been left to remind the lads of the mothers at home who never cease to yearn over them and pray for their safety. The statue is the figure of a mother, and a mother separated from her Son. In most pictures and statues of the Virgin Mother her Son is nestling in her arms. But this is the mother of His manhood. He has left His village home and gone

out into the world. She wonders how He is faring. Is He well or ill? There is no post to tell her. Are men kind to Him or cruel? Oh that she could go to Him and protect Him as in His infancy! Why could He not have remained a babe for ever? She would not have wearied with nursing, and only the approach of old age would have caused her dismay. She cannot rest in Nazareth. She must go up to Jerusalem. She has a sister, and it will be sisterly to visit her. Surely some premonition has warned her that Jesus is in danger, for can anything be hidden from a mother? Have they not special endowments of the soul? She finds Him, but the shadow of death is already upon Him. In helpless grief she stands beside His cross, and the sword that goes through His heart pierces her own. That is the statue left at Montauban —a mother without her boy, and searching for Him where the shadows of death fall thickest. It may not be any special providence that this figure of a mother has been spared where no living mother may come; but it looks like one. Thousands of those who pass by will never see their mothers again in this world, nor even the picture of one. She is the last woman to be seen on the way through the valley of the shadow of death that begins at Montauban. She stands there as the representative of the world's

womanhood, sorrowing over the noble men who are passing by into the deepening shadow. While one gazes at her the roadsides seem to throng with the sad faces of mothers, each one of whom anxiously looks at the soldiers in the passing regiments to see if her own boy is there.

Strong buildings of iron and stone have been blown to fragments, but the frail image of motherhood has survived. Iron shells can destroy buildings of iron and stone, but they cannot destroy the love and solicitude of a mother. Love will follow even where it cannot save, and the dying are comforted by the sense of its presence. It is inconceivable that in the wrestle with death love will be vanquished. With our Lord, who is 'the resurrection and the life,' we shall surely meet our loved ones on the other side of the grave, and, looking back, say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, thy victory?'

XVIII

THE OPEN CHURCH IN MAN'S LAND

THIS is Man's Land. During the last few days I have seen scores of thousands of men. All were soldiers, and they represented many races—British, Colonial, French, Algerian, Negro, and German. But for more than three weeks, though I have travelled many miles, I have seen no woman or child. This is no place for women and children. The work to be done is men's work. The sights to be seen and the sufferings to be endured are for men. There is no woman or child for miles around. They, thank God, are out of it. One half, and that the better half, of humanity is saved amid this wreck of the world. I have seen nothing even to suggest the presence of women, except that two nights ago a beautiful grey kitten stole into my tent at supper-time. It suggested a home somewhere near; but there was none. It came from I know not whence—a sort of angel's visit. We were both a bit lonely, I suppose, and soon became chums. When I lay down on the

ground to sleep it crept into my sleeping-bag with me and stayed there till morning. Then it escaped, I know not whither. Probably some homesick fellow kidnapped it. Dogs we have in plenty. They are men's friends. But cats are women's friends, and in all this wide camp I have seen none but my little lost kitten. The tents, 'bivvies,' and wood fires all declare this to be Man's Land, as do also the petrol tins used as pans and kettles and the biscuit-tin lids used as frying-pans.

The other night I walked into a little town some two miles away. In the market-place I stood for a long time watching the traffic. It was worth watching. Multitudes of mule—or pony—drawn limbers and motor-driven ammunition wagons rushed along in what seemed the most reckless fashion. The drivers were mostly French and Algerian, though now and then an English wagon or cycle passed. The sight was thrilling, but there were no women at the windows and no excited children at the doorways. The onlookers were all soldiers, mostly French. I was still in Man's Land. Behind me stood a church centuries old. Its stones had echoed to the tramp of many armies. The soldiers of the past had perished, but it had survived. I decided to enter. It never occurred to me that it might be closed. In France a closed

church is a rarity. On entering a village or town I always make for the church, and it is seldom indeed that I have been repulsed by a lock. But this church was in Man's Land, and we have been told times innumerable that churches are for women and children; that they are not for men—especially men of valour. Besides, Frenchmen are said to be atheists. Did not France, a century or two ago, produce an atheist called Voltaire? I ought to have remembered these things, and I ought to have concluded that the door would be locked. But my memory is not good, and my instincts are. I therefore followed my instincts and tried the door.

It opened, and I found myself in a beautiful old church. The light was dim, restful and conducive to religious meditation. The thick walls kept out both the sound of the guns and the noise of the madly rushing traffic of the street. A glance round revealed beautifully stained-glass windows, pictures, and plaster statues. A fine organ stood in the back gallery. There was a splendid central altar, flanked by simpler side altars, and the massive pillars gave the sides of the church the appearance of side chapels, and as such they are often used. I quietly took a seat; I was not alone, but I was unnoticed. Here and there was a French soldier in his war-worn

grey-blue uniform. How restful it was to sit in the softened light after looking on the hectic flush of the dying day! The door opened continually and other soldiers entered, but no one turned to look at them. The worshippers gave their whole attention to God. On entering, each soldier went up to the shell of holy water and, dipping his fingers in it, made the sign of the cross upon his brow and breast—reconsecrating to Christ brain and heart. Two come in together, and I saw a beautiful expression of comradeship. The one nearest the shell dipped his hand in the water, touched with his wet fingers the hand of his comrade, and together they made the sign of the cross. They were comrades in the trenches and comrades in the church. Having made the sign of the cross, each soldier entering knelt, on one knee, towards the altar, and then stepped into a pew. There he sat for a time in quiet meditation, and then knelt in prayer. His act of worship completed, he stepped back into the aisle, bowed towards the altar, crossed himself again, and left the church. Within half an hour I watched scores of soldiers enter, worship, and leave. There were no doorkeeper, no steward, no priest, no lights, and no books. The organ was silent. No one looked about, and no one uttered a word. They came to worship, and having

worshipped they departed. No Quaker was ever more independent of priest or preacher. Somehow the Roman Catholic Church is a people's Church. Into the most gorgeous cathedrals women enter on their way from market. They put their shopping bag on one chair and kneel on the next. Their devotions ended, they go home and cook the midday meal. Dirty, unshaved soldiers, straight from the trenches, enter any church they see, by day or night, say their prayers, and pass on their way.

I was about to leave when some one entered with two branching candlesticks of five lights each, and placed them on the side-altar nearest the door. Though many soldiers had left, the pews in front of me were filling. The priest entered, but the congregation did not stand. He entered as unobtrusively as the soldiers, and, like them, reverently knelt to pray. Then, still kneeling, he lifted up his voice in prayer. It was a rich, full baritone voice, and, instead of intoning, he sang the prayers. I did not understand a word, nor did I need to, for I understood his spirit and could share in his devotions. At the end of each prayer the soldiers sang the response, and my heart sang with them. These soldiers—some of them young lads, others bearded men—had come from many a scattered village or town in France or her colonies. Yet

without a book, and with no help but the organ, they were able to join in the responses. They knew both the music and the words, and there, in the twilight of the old church, in the very heart of a raging war, they sang like nightingales their evening prayer. After the prayers they sang a hymn. With the plaintive sweetness of a Welsh congregation they sang, and with the touching simplicity and fervour of revival services. The tears welled up in my eyes. There will surely be a revival of religion in France. There *is* a revival. That singing was a revival set to music. There was something in it that I have not heard, no, not in Israel; something that touched the hidden springs of life. Deep called unto deep. The singers wore on their arms the braid that spoke of eighteen months or two years at the Front. They were not weak-kneed emotionalists, though they sang with emotion. They were men who had delivered Verdun and many a fair town of France. After the hymn there were the recitation of a creed, the elevation of the Host, more beautiful singing, and at last the Benediction. Then we passed out—they to their comrades in blue, I to my comrades in khaki, some of the dearest of whom laid down their lives but yesterday. Those French soldiers and I will never meet again here, but as surely as we are comrades in

arms so are we comrades in Christ, and we shall meet above where there is but one language and one Church.

I picked my way through the traffic and mud and reached the tented fields. On my right roared the guns, while their flashes lit up my way like sheet-lightning. On my left were heaps of spent shells, and behind them twinkled innumerable little camp fires. The lads were cooking their evening meal. It is less than a week ago, yet many of those lads are now lying still in death. They died yesterday, and many more go forth to die to-morrow. For the second time in one week they have 'to go over the top' 'into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell.' Many are unnerved by yesterday's horrors, but it is

> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do and die.

This is Man's Land. But in Man's Land there is a church with doors always open; and often among the tents there are heard the songs of praise and prayer, for in the Valley of the Shadow of Death man cannot live by bread alone.

XIX

COURAGE AND THE CURTAIN

DURING the most deadly battle of the Somme campaign the regiments of our division had forced their way into the German trenches, and were holding on to them with desperate valour. As the hours wore on it became obvious that retirement was inevitable; but the men were out to win, and would not consider the possibility of failure so long as there was even a forlorn hope. The task of the runners between the regiments and their headquarters was one of desperate adventure. In fact, the casualties were so heavy that messages had to be duplicated and even triplicated in order to ensure one getting through. It was with the utmost excitement, an orderly-room sergeant told me, that they watched the runners crossing 'No Man's Land.' One after another as the poor fellows handed in their messages they fell down in a swoon, and had to be revived with brandy. One of them had picked up a German helmet in the captured trench and

tied it to his waist. As he ran across 'No Man's Land' and pierced the curtain of fire he was observed to be in a state of collapse, but each time when about to fall he glanced down at the helmet, placed his hand upon it, and staggered on. At last he reached the head-quarters, handed in his message, and fainted away. The helmet had reminded him of his friends at home, who would be proud of it; of the trenches captured from the enemy, which must be held at all cost; and of his comrades left there in deadly peril.

One of the messages brought through the curtain was from a captain who, by his marvellous courage and coolness, saved his company from utter disaster. It ran: 'No bombs left. I have three alternatives. One, to stay and be wiped out; two, to surrender; three, to retire. One and two are distasteful to me. With your permission I will retire.' Still smoking a cigarette he handed the note to a runner, who dashed with it across 'No Man's Land' to the colonel. The captain was without bombs because it was impossible to get them through the curtain. Three regimental companies of bomb-carriers, each numbering sixteen, had been wiped out. Rifles were useless, and the weary fighters had to return through the curtain of fire they had so gallantly pierced in the morning. During the

evening there was an attempt to bring in the wounded under cover of darkness, but the bombardment had been so terrible that some of the men had lost all strength of nerve. A doctor who had been decorated with the M.C. told me that when he called on a stretcher-bearer to follow him into 'No Man's Land' the young fellow fainted away. He called on another, and he also fainted. They were of no use, and he had to call on others. The stretcher-bearers are noted for their courage, but the curtain of fire which had hung all day over 'No Man's Land' had left little strength for the dangerous duties of the evening. One who was sent out to bring in a wounded man discovered when he bent over him that it was his own brother, and had a just reward for his courage.

In the old wars soldiers grew accustomed to the whizzing of bullets or the rush of cannon-balls, and the nerves of veterans were scarcely impaired. But no one can get used to the shell-fire of modern war. Shells are as terrifying to veterans as to new-comers. High explosives have a power to frighten such as is possessed neither by rifles nor machine-guns. The shell rushes at you with a piercing scream, but so swiftly that it cannot be seen. It bursts with a horrible crash, scoops out a deep crater, and scatters the soil and its own fragments far and

wide. A thick cloud of green, white, or black smoke rises above it, and fills the air with the smell of powder. I have seen a grave in which were buried the twenty-six victims of a single shell. Even when no one is hit the shell carries dismay to those near enough to see it burst, for no one knows where the next will fall. The average dug-out is no protection against a direct hit, and in deep dug-outs there is danger of being buried alive. After long exposure to such dangers men are apt to lose their nerve and become wellnigh worthless. To guard against the danger of demoralization regiments are taken out of the line for regular rests in billets, and 'leave' to go home is given as often as possible. During an offensive divisions cannot be used with success for more than short periods. New divisions must relieve them so that they may make good their losses, and, what is more important still, recover their nervous force. To rest men is to save them as effectives. The army which is compelled to keep its men longest in the trenches and opposed to the heaviest shelling will have the greatest wastage in sick, and will sooner or later become utterly demoralized, for shell-fire is insupportable for long periods, and is becoming increasingly intolerable as the War proceeds. You cannot kill or wound a whole army, but you can frighten one, and when

it is sufficiently frightened it either runs or surrenders. The aim of battle, therefore, is to frighten the enemy, and for this purpose there is nothing to equal high-explosive shells. Mere shell-shock incapacitates men, and sometimes it even carries death. In one of our trenches after the explosion of a shell a young officer quietly fell over on his side, dead, although quite free from wounds. One of our doctors told me that as he entered Combles he saw a youth lifted high into the air by the force of a shell. On examining the body a few minutes later he found it quite dead but without the slightest mark of injury upon it. Men cannot listen to and see bursting shells month after month without the exhaustion of their nervous force. The bravest of the brave will become timid, and the veteran will be more affected than the new-comer. When men are called upon to dash over a stretch of ground upon which the enemy is concentrating all his guns so as to form a veritable curtain of fire, they must be more than brave; they must be fresh. My own division was taken out of the line for three months before being thrown into the fighting on the Somme. The British soldier is confident in his cause, in God, and in himself. After proper resting he will dash through the thickest curtain of fire ever formed, and snatch victory out of even the jaws of death. All are

not equally brave, but the average of courage is incredibly high. The charge of cowardice is extremely rare; and if some fall short of all that is expected of them, it is not for us who have never faced the curtain to judge them. They are all volunteers, and we must remember the heroic resolve which brought them out. If sometimes the body fails to second the will, we must neither be surprised nor censorious. Those who have been through the most and have shown the greatest courage are ever, I have noticed, the last to speak unkindly of those who fail. Cases of even comparative failure are few, while cases of astounding courage have almost ceased to surprise. One of the sergeants of the Westminsters who was ordered to remain in reserve during the fight of July 1 had the audacity to persuade another sergeant, who had to go over the top, to exchange places with him. Three times he went to the company commander and pleaded with him to sanction the arrangement. Permission was refused, but he found his chance in later battles, and before the end of the summer had won the D.C.M. On the other hand, a doctor told me of a youth who shrank from the ordeal, and tried to get out of it by feigning illness. The attempt was a failure, and he was called upon to do his duty. The day after the battle there was a short truce, and

the doctor went over into 'No Man's Land' to gather in the wounded. To his dismay the first dead body he saw was the body of this youth. He had 'made good,' and died a hero's death. 'If you have a stretcher left when you have got in the wounded, carry back this body,' he commanded the bearers. It was done and the soldier who had at first shrunk from the fight and then faced it was given special burial; but none knew why save the doctor. When one remembers that the prodigies of valour daily seen on the Front are performed by just ordinary men, such as we used to see on football-grounds, or in city offices, workshops, and churches, a new faith in humanity and its future is begotten. Men are greater than we thought, and the soul has triumphed over the body to a degree undreamed of. The courage is not brute courage. The body trembles and afraid. It is pushed on through the curtain of fire by the soul within. I have spoken with many heroes, but never with one who was without fear. The strongest-nerved and stoutest-hearted men in the Army tremble as they cross 'No Man's Land' through a barrage of shells, but they force themselves on at the leisurely pace ordered beforehand, and take the enemy trenches or die. It is a fact of immense spiritual significance and hope. Men faint away, but do not run away. They force themselves

through the inferno of fire as Livingstone forced his weakened body through the fever-haunted swamps of Africa, and perhaps at last faint away as he did into the arms of death. This spiritual courage is the doom of war. While men were little better than animals the ordeal of battle sufficed, but now that the soul has won such complete ascendency over the body it is inadequate and excessively costly. New methods of settling differences and of winning power and prestige must be found. This may well prove the last of wars amongst great nations, for the courage of the average man is as the Star of Bethlehem leading the wise onward through the night to the reign of peace. Men are feeling the need of something bigger than war for their energy and valour, and they will find it in the battle against poverty, suffering, ignorance, and sin.

XX

THE FALLING STATUE OF ALBERT

THE regiment was coming out of the trenches after fourteen days of hardship and danger in which neither officer nor man had washed or shaved or taken off his boots. With the stores and transport I was in advance of the regiment, and had reached the sandpit where our tent was to be pitched for the night. Evening was coming on, but it was still light, and my eyes were fixed on a town some two miles away. 'That is Albert,' said the quartermaster, joining me. 'Do you see the statue of the Virgin on the top of the church tower? The dome of the tower has been hit by a shell, and the statue has fallen towards the streets. It is said that the people of Albert believe that when the statue falls to the ground the War will end.' Even from the sandpit, two miles away, I could see the statue hanging over the street as if falling, and I determined to visit the church at the first opportunity.

Next morning I cycled into the town, and,

leaving my bicycle in the central square, walked towards the church. It is known as La Basilique de Notre-Dame de Brebieres, and is a magnificent building in the Byzantine style. I found it in ruins. Hundreds of shells had been hurled at it, and windows, walls, and roofs had all alike been shattered. The tower could hardly keep its balance, so much had been blown away. Barbed wire barred the entrance lest falling stones should carry death to the unwary. Nevertheless one could see something of the desolation within. The Germans had turned a sanctuary into a death-trap. In that stark, staring ruin of what was once so good and fair we see something of the baneful moral and spiritual significance of modern Germany. The homes around the church were all empty and in ruins, for when the church is destroyed there can be little security for the home. I entered some of the houses and walked from basement to garret, but there was no patter of little feet and no sound of feasting. The women had taken their children and household goods to some place of safety, and had not troubled to close the doors behind them. The men had woven barbed wire about their church that the holy place might remain untouched until their return—if they should return. Then they had taken their rifles and gone after the desolater of their sanctuary.

There will be no return and no rebuilding of home or church until the evil-doer has been brought to justice, and life and well-being have been made secure. I have seen the gleaming of the French bayonets on the desolated fields of the Somme. They were forged in the home fires and altar fires of their ruined towns, and they will go deep into the hearts of the invaders. The sword that drove Adam out of Paradise never gleamed more terribly. The steel is tipped with the vengeance of heaven. Were Germany's soldiers innumerable as the sand they could not face the gleaming eyes and bayonets of France. It is not France that Germany is up against; it is God. The names Louvain, *Lusitania,* Lille, and Rheims are but a modern rendering upon Germany's walls of 'Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin.'

Yet the blasted church and the ruined homes around it were not the things that impressed my imagination most. Such sights are common in France, and I have seen them almost daily for months. It is the statue on the top of the tower that draws all eyes. There is nothing quite like it on any front. The tower is of great height, and before the War the statue stood upright on the dome. It is the figure of the Virgin Mary holding above her head the infant Jesus. He was held by her high above the town, as if to

receive the worship of mankind, and His arms were outspread in blessing. It was an attitude of triumph. Then the War came, and the statue fell over, and ever since it has remained hanging half-way over the street, so that passers-by see above them the outspread arms of Jesus. To some it is the picture of a falling Christ. To others it is the picture of a Christ who stoops to bless the oppressed and afflicted. In a recent article Mr. Arnold Bennett, the novelist, wrote: 'The War has finally demonstrated the authenticity of an event which, in importance, far transcends the war itself—namely, the fall of the Christian religion.' The words are perhaps hardly worth quoting, because in the same article Mr. Bennett makes a self-revelation which sends down the value of his opinion on religious matters to zero. He declares: 'My curiosity about a future life is intermittent and mild. It never inconveniences me. I shall stick to life as long as I can, but the prospect of death gives me no moral or spiritual qualm. I have no supernatural religion, and I never had one. I do not feel the need of a supernatural religion, and I have never felt such a need.'

Seeing, therefore, that he is totally without experience of, or curiosity about, the Christian religion, his judgment on it has no more value than a criticism of his novels of the Five Towns

by a Chinaman who has never been out of his native land. I quote his words, therefore, not because of their intrinsic value as an opinion, but because he is well known, and states his view with a baldness and vigour such as only those can who either know everything or nothing about their subject. The words serve as an expression of the doubt which has come even to some who have had considerable experience of Christianity and have a great 'curiosity about a future life.' Most of us felt alarmed for Christianity when the War broke out. We were alarmed as the good Catholics of Albert were when they saw the statue of the Virgin and Child fall from its upright position. It seemed as if it were falling to the ground. If Christ ruled on high, could such atrocities happen in Belgium? Could it be possible that we had been mistaken, and that Christ still slept in a Syrian grave? Were not the outbreak and continuance of barbarism a sign that Christianity had failed? Then came the magnificent and voluntary rally to the flag in defence of Belgium. As we saw our young men march out to die for others, freely and without compulsion, we saw again the cross on Calvary, and we knew that Christ was sleeping in no Syrian grave, but dwelling in the hearts of our gallant brothers, and inspiring them to follow in his steps. The glorious rally

to the defence of liberty, justice, truth and humanity dwarfed in its sensationalism the lapse into barbarism. Never before had so many offered to die for the ideals of Christianity. We saw that Christianity had stooped from the sky to the street. It had become incarnate. Christianity was no more a thing high and remote from men, something merely ideal and worthy of homage. It had become a practical thing, something to live and die for. We could not pass along the commonest street without seeing a vision of the Babe who came to bring peace and goodwill to men by living and dying for them. Christ had not fallen. He had stooped, and stooped in order to bless. When something of Belgium's sorrow came on us, and the blinds of our windows were drawn, we ceased to look for a Christ remote and distant; we found Him by the vacant chair, and kissed the pierced hands that brought to us the peace of God.

Our regiment had lost heavily in the fighting at Leuze Wood, and, after two days' rest, was returning to the attack. I therefore held a service on the ground where it had bivouacked the night before, and gave the men a few words of Christian comfort before they marched. At the close of the service a young Churchman—a candidate for Holy Orders—came to me. Taking from his breast-pocket a worn and dirty copy of

Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven,* he told me how, in the last battle, he had been cut off, and compelled to shelter in a shell-hole, and wait for the night to enable him to crawl back to his regiment. During those five hours of terrible suspense he read *The Hound of Heaven,* and in its assurance of God's love found the comfort and strength he needed. If ever a place seemed forsaken of God it was Leuze Wood, or, as the men called it, Lousy Wood, on the day of battle. It was hidden by the smoke of bursting shells, and it seemed impossible that any who had entered it would ever return. Yet like a 'hound of heaven' the love of God had tracked the young soldier to his shell-hole, and remained with him to the end. Sceptics sitting at home in comfortable chairs point to the shell-ploughed fields of the Somme as the burial-place of a fallen Christianity; but that is not the view of the officers and men on the spot. There, amid the evidences of man's cruel hatred and greed, they realize most fully the presence of Christ and the love that made Him die for them. They cannot understand the mystery of God's providence, but they are assured of His presence and love. It is there, too, that they are seen at their noblest. Often have they made me feel that I was in the presence of men 'whose shoes I am not worthy to

bear.' And often has my faith been shamed by the faith and testimony of the wounded. It is at home and not on the Somme that men grow sceptical. 'You must just trust in God, and do your best,' I said to a group on the evening before a battle. 'We shall not fail to do that, sir,' said one of them, upon whose breast was the ribbon of the D.C.M.

They know that Christ has not fallen, but has stooped to be nearer the weak and wounded and sorrowful. Their favourite hymn on the Somme was:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

They realize that 'in all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them.'

XXI

THE MEN OF THE LIMP

THE falling statue at Albert is worthy of study, for the sculptor was a thinker. His work is called 'The Virgin of the Limp,' because the Madonna he has chiselled is lame. The sculptor has made the figure of Christ perfect, but he has deformed the Virgin by giving her a limp. Christ is perfect and pre-eminent; and as she holds her Son high above her for the world's admiration the Virgin seems to say, 'Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Him be all the glory.' Like John the Baptist, she proclaims to all who draw near, 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' She is but the candlestick. He is the Light. He is without blemish, but she is disfigured. The only glory the sculptor has given her is the glory of exalting her Son and Saviour. She is 'highly favoured' and 'blessed among women' because she has been appointed nurse to her infant Lord, and has responded to the call with humility and joy. To the privilege are attached the

pain and disfigurement of lameness. She upholds and exalts Christ, but the strain causes lameness. Possibly the sculptor knew from experience something of the self-sacrifice of mothers, for he has given the Madonna the true spirit of motherhood. She has crippled herself for her Son. Had the Virgin kept Jesus strained to her breast and hidden from the world, she would not, in the statue, have been lame. But, unselfishly, she holds Him aloft, for He is not only the Light of her own heart, but also the Light of the World. The strain has crippled her, but her deformity is her glory.

The sculptor has preached better than he knew. His statue in the heart of the Somme has become more than the artistic expression of the unselfish service of the Virgin Mother. It has become the spiritual interpretation of the great struggle on the Somme front. Hundreds of thousands of French and English soldiers have looked up at the limp Virgin as they have marched through the shell-torn streets of Albert on their way to battle. A few days later many of them lay mangled and dead, while ambulance wagons came rushing back with the limp and maimed. A statue of a lame English soldier holding above his head, out of harm's way, a beautiful and perfect child would, to my mind, be the most perfect expression of England's

part in this great struggle. I have heard of a frightened Belgian child who could not be lulled to sleep; but when a khaki-clad doctor entered the room, she stretched out her arms to him, crying, 'English, English,' and fell asleep on his breast. That is it.

There are times when men can only 'enter into *life* maimed,' and our soldiers have chosen maiming rather than stand outside the pale of honour and chivalry. One morning while home on leave I entered the refreshment-room at Euston Station to get some breakfast. A soldier, wounded in the arm, sat at the next table, and a little later a smiling youth in civilian clothes came limping in the same direction. The soldier quickly rose and lent him his unwounded arm. I was slow in understanding, and did not grasp the situation until the youth was seated. 'Why do you limp?' I asked. He then told me of a great battle in which he had been wounded. Bullets had caught him in the arm and shoulder, and his right leg had been shattered. This, he told me, was his first day with an artificial leg; and he tapped it merrily with his stick. He was a bit clumsy at present, but would, he thought, soon get used to it and walk quite well. Later on I saw him limping down the corridor of the train. He was still smiling. He will play no more games, for his place will

be with the old men when youth is at its sport. But he will still smile, knowing well that the children owe their unshadowed joy and freedom to his lameness.

On my way back from England I breakfasted at Rouen with a young officer who had brought out a draft. He enlisted at fifteen, and went out to the Front as a private. There, carrying his pack on the long marches, he strained his heart. Later he was given a commission, but his father, a soldier in the trenches, wishes him to resign it on account of the weakness of his heart. He is under age and can resign with honor, but his father will plead in vain. Such a youth is priceless; and later, as we stood together in the place where Joan of Arc was martyred, I thought him not unworthy to be compared with her. He has the heart of an Atlas, though not the strength, and we need not fear for the world while there are such to uphold it. His heart has a limp in it, but the hearts of our children will be unfettered and free. The present generation has accepted maiming that it may lift the coming generation out of the fear and suffering of war. By their unselfishness these men of the limp have brought back our minds to the redeeming work of Christ. They have given us a deeper insight into the Atonement, and it will have a larger place in the thought and preach-

ing of the future. When we see them limping through our streets or into our churches, we shall think of Him who trod the way of Calvary that we might tread the way of peace.

XXII

A DARK RIDE

I WAS on my bicycle, and had reached the level-crossing of the railway. 'Halt! Who goes there?' 'A friend—a chaplain.' 'Pass, friend; but put your light out.'

In this land where a strange tongue is spoken it is always sweet to hear some lone sentry, hidden away in the folds of darkness, utter the comforting words, 'Pass, friend'—especially if, a moment before, he has startled you by his unexpected and threatening 'Halt!' He was England's guardian, and he called me 'friend' —England's friend. Yes, the words were sweet as words may be.

But his other words, 'Put your light out,' were not sweet. A light for the path on a dark night in a foreign land is a pleasant companion to one who travels alone. Besides, I was particularly proud of my lamp that night, and had put my trust in it. I have a strain of the 'Foolish Virgins' in me. Usually I take the lamp—because it happens to be on the bicycle—but

often I forget to take any oil either in it or with it. I had been on this road in the morning, however, and knew that I was 'tempting providence' by going on it at night. I had, therefore, seen that the lamp was trimmed for this journey. It was a little wick lamp, filled with paraffin, and could not burn without smoking; but it gave a light, and, however modest, a light was precious on such a night. The sentry's demand filled me with despair. It was as if the stars had fallen into the sea.

'Put out my light!' I exclaimed.

'Yes, sir; no lights are allowed between here and the trenches.'

'But,' I said, willing to face only one half of the facts, 'it's just from here onward that I need a light.'

'Sorry, sir, but it can't be helped. Orders is orders.'

It was the voice of the inevitable that spoke. He was a private and called me 'sir,' but I knew I must obey him. Behind him stood all the might of Britain, and, dimly, he knew it. I might as well supplicate 'the man in the moon' as plead with him for the life of my little lamp. For privates and generals alike 'orders is orders.' We all come to the crossing where the light has to go out. A man is a vain thing, and always coming up against something mightier

than himself to which he must bow—sometimes with smiles and sometimes with tears. I blew out my light and looked into the darkness. There was no moon. The upper air was filled with a wet mist that blinded most of the stars. The few that peered through at the earth looked weak and watery, like the eyes of a drunkard. They would be of little use to a cyclist.

Every few seconds bright lights waxed and waned in the distance. They were the beautiful star-shells that all night long light up 'No Man's Land.' They affect one strangely. I have seen that 'No Man's Land' from the firing-trench—peeping cautiously 'over the top,' and, afterwards, studying it more leisurely through a periscope. There I could see 'Mystery Wood,' where, in a great and unsuccessful battle, three British battalions disappeared and have never been heard of since. These bright lights were rising from near 'Mystery Wood.' They were being sent up by the Germans, who are nervous at nights. But they seemed more like bright signals from the long-lost battalions. The lights were pure and bright as the memory of the dead, but I could not steer by them. Their gleams were too fitful.

Yet I must on. On my bicycle I carried a Bible and hymn-books. I carried bread and wine. Away in the darkness was a barn, fire-

less and draughty. The air was damp and the wind bitter. But in the barn would be a few soldier lads waiting for that Bible, those songs, and that memorable bread and wine. I must not fail them. The previous Sunday they were in the firing-line, and could have no service. Even this morning, though I had called a service for nine o'clock, none had come, and I had waited in vain. All were on fatigue duties. The colonel had warned me, but I had taken the risk. I must take the risk again. One or two hungry souls might be free to come to the feast, and the table must be spread. But I had no light for the way!

During the week a mother had asked me to make inquiries about her boy, who was reported 'missing,' and believed to be killed. 'Please, sir,' she had written with an illiterate hand, 'I don't know what to do. I am a widow, and ill, and he is all I had.' It is but one of hundreds of such letters that have come to me. He was her lamp, her beautiful lamp, the lamp that was to light her to the end of her journey. She had counted on him to go with her as her eyes grew dim with age and her step feeble. He would be a 'lamp unto her feet, and a light unto her path.' But now his light was quenched; and as she looked into the darkness and thought of the way before her, the pitiful and piercing cry es-

caped her, 'I don't know what to do. . . . He is all I had.' Yet she must on.

In the early part of the month I was in a night train taking my wife back to her home, from which I had to start for France a few hours later. And a minister in the other corner told me how his brother—a famous Greek scholar—had lost his son. The bullet had gone through the Greek Testament in the boy's breast-pocket. Before such a tragedy no words may be spoken. Yet the father must on. Though his lamp lies shattered, the road must be trod. There are eyes peering through the darkness for his coming, and ears that listen for a foot that is 'beautiful upon the mountains.' There are hearts that wait for his message and the bread and the wine he brings. 'Pass, friend.' It is the voice of a private to a captain under the weeping mist that shadows a world.

Perhaps while I was standing hesitant before the darkness that swallowed up the road some brother minister at home hid his face in his hands as he leaned over the table in the church vestry. It was time for the service, but the stewards kept silence. His soul was in the garden of sorrow, and they 'stood as it were a stone's throw from him.' Often he had looked into the bright face of his boy, and whispered to the mother, 'At eventide there shall be light.' But

now he has come to the crossing, and the light has been quenched. May he not turn back home and be alone with his sorrow? Must he pass through that door into the church with its thousand eyes? 'Pass, friend,' whispered duty; 'there are other stricken souls beyond the door. Take them your Bible and your songs, your strengthening bread and gladdening wine.' As he passed through the door some one's life brightened as he passed—some poor ailing widow who had known not what to do because she had lost her all.

It is not kings who govern us. It is the children we once were. Had the boy I used to be learned to cycle, I should have been an expert now. But the rascal did not; he went gathering flowers and watching fledglings in their nests instead, and I, the man, have to suffer for his negligences. But he has my forgiveness, for in my heart his flowers are still blooming and his birds singing. Like George Stephenson's 'Rocket,' I do my best, but it's woe to the cow, or soldier, who gets in my way, as one of the men realized when I collided with him on the return journey. And it is woe to me, for I am not a man of iron. 'Keep to your right,' called, approvingly, two soldierlike figures emerging from the darkness. 'Thanks,' I said as I passed. I was doing my best to keep the French rule of

the road, and was pleased to think they could see that my intentions, if not achievements, were good. The road had a hump like a camel, and if you missed the exact centre the tires slipped down the side of the hump, and you needed cat's feet to come to ground with. If you kept to the centre of the greasy road—which was as difficult as climbing a greasy pole—you would probably find, when it was too late, that some soldier was just as silently and swiftly cycling along the middle of the hump from the other direction; and a salvage corps would be needed to gather up the fragments that remained and decide which was soldier and which chaplain. If, to avoid giving the salvage corps more work, you kept to the right, then you cycled through an endless series of puddles, and the bicycle pitched and tossed like the troopship that carried you across the channel. On each side of the road was a deep ditch full of water, as in our own fen country. If, therefore, you missed the glint of the puddles and went a little too far to the right, you pitched into the ditch, for there was nothing to keep you out except your predilections.

I had not gone a hundred yards when I heard the unwelcome rumble of a wagon. It came looming out of the darkness with the slow, shuffling gait of a 'tank,' but it had none of the

'tank's' cheerful 'clack, clack.' I rang the bell, and the shapeless hulk slunk nearer to the ditch on its right. 'You are a born fool to take such risks,' I whispered to myself (by way of encouragement), as I dimly glanced at the space between the wagon and the ditch. I tried to steer a middle course, but the ditch water, how it gleamed! Memories of boyhood's catastrophies overwhelmed me, and I recoiled from the water's glint as from an evil eye. My shoulder knocked against the rear wheel of the wagon, the bicycle staggered under the impact, and then, after a moment of 'philosophic doubt,' righted itself and pursued the uneven tenor of its way. 'That shall be a warning,' I muttered; 'I will get off next time.' I did, but the vehicle turned out to be a limber, and it was narrow enough for me to have ridden past. 'I shall stay on next time,' I resolved. Who can know what is best for him? The old man knows, but his wisdom comes too late. His journey is done. He can convey his property to another, but not his wisdom. Wise words are not wisdom, except to the already wise.

I had been sliding and pitching and tossing for some yards when, suddenly, the wheels, losing patience with one another, dissolved partnership; the front wheel turning one way and the back wheel another. Catlike, I fell on my

feet, for I keep the bicycle seat low in anticipation of such side-slips. But the left spring of the saddle was broken in the fall, and when I remounted the balance of the bicycle was disturbed, and I lived in fear and dread—like a man with one lung or a reduced stipend—of losing that which remained.

At last I reached the barn. It was just behind the first-line trenches. The sharp crack of the machine-guns filled the air with a myriad sounds, and the beautiful star-shells lit up the sky. Inside the barn I found ten soldiers lads round a candle.

'We are so glad you've come,' they said; 'we were afraid something had happened to you. We could not come this morning. We were on fatigue duties.'

One of the lads had been present at the Sacrament before the last big battle, and had given me his mother's address. Another had heard me at the East Ham Mission in the days of peace. A third was from Boston, and a fourth from Thornton Heath. I got out my candles and we lit up the old barn. It was cold and draughty, so I put my coat on again. It was Sunday night, and about service time, and we thought of our people at home.

I had just been home on leave, and on one of the Sundays the preacher had forgotten the lads

at the Front all day in his prayers. Forgotten these lads who were dying for him! When I heard the Benediction, and knew that his last chance was gone, tears came into my eyes, and I wanted to be back with the lads who could be so great, though so forgotten. Never a service comes in which we forget to pray for the people at home. Can we forget that we have dear ones, and that they are not here? We thought of the old pew, the organ, the choir, the preacher. We sang the old hymns. We had no organ, but it was sweeter than the sweetest organ to hear those ten lads sing:

At even, ere the sun was set.

I spoke to them from the words, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' (Ps. lxxviii. 19). Then we sang 'When I survey the wondrous cross,' and after prayer we gathered round the Lord's table to partake of the supper which He had spread for us, even in the wilderness.

XXIII

'ALL SEATED ON THE GROUND'

OUR regiments are serving short periods in the trenches followed by more restful periods in billets. When they are out of the trenches they are kept in reserve in some tiny village just behind the line, and are employed on fatigue duties. Last Sunday two of my regiments were in billets, and, as they will be in the trenches next Sunday, I had to give them their Christmas sermon early. Both services were held in barns used as billets, but I will only describe one of them. There was no fire, and there were no seats. The place was draughty and the light dim. But what did we care? We sang Christmas hymns; and we prayed for the people at home. Our Christmas will be happier than theirs, for they have to live in the old places, and go through the old festivities, without the old faces; whereas here *all* is strange, and we listen for no light foot, and look at no favourite chair or couch for one who is not there. After the third carol I asked them to make themselves as comfortable as they could for the

sermon—for we give them sermons out here; they would not like it if we did not; it would not be like home. There was a minute or two's bustle and then they were quiet—'all seated on the ground.' 'Now you are like the shepherds watching their flocks by night,' I said, and they laughed, for they are Londoners and hardly know a sheep from a goat; but it was a bit of 'make believe' such as they have indulged in by many a Christmas fire before this great trouble came upon the world. In Jack London's *White Fang* there is a vivid picture of a camp-fire at night on the prairie. A few yards beyond the fire the two travellers could, in the darkness, see innumerable pairs of shining eyes. The wolves could not be seen, only their eyes. In our barn the light was dim. The men were a mass of khaki, but their eyes shone like lamps on a dark night. Thinking of them now I cannot recall their faces with any vividness. I just see against the blur of khaki scores of pairs of beautiful eyes.

'I want to speak to you this morning,' I said, 'about some of the principles upon which God governs this world of His. Turn to St. Matt. ii. 18, 19, and 20. "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they

are not. *But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth* in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: *for they are dead which sought the young child's life.*"

'When the Herods die the angels appear. They have been close at hand all the time, hidden within the shadows, keeping watch above God's own.

> The angels keep their ancient places;
> Turn but a stone and start a wing;
> 'Tis our, 'tis our estranged faces
> That miss the many-splendoured thing.

'We must never forget the powers of the world to come. There are forces about us that cannot be seen with the eyes. Moses made a nation out of a rabble, and led it through a vast wilderness of despair and failure to the land of promise because he "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." You have heard of the angels at Mons. It is a legend, but it is the enshrinement of the truth. In this War we are on the side of the angels, and they fight for us. Elisha's servant, when he saw the enemy surrounding his master, lost all hope and yielded to despair. But when the eyes of his soul were opened he saw that the hills were

aflame with the rescuing angels of God. As Elisha's enemies were led away captive they felt a power they could neither see nor understand. Elisha understood because he was a seer, and had visions of the powers that lie behind this physical world of ours. When Christ was tempted forty days and nights of the devil in the wilderness there was nothing to see but the rank grass, the barren stones, and the wild beasts that prowled around Him, but when the temptation was ended we read that "angels came and ministered unto Him." They had been within call all the time, and you had to "turn but a stone and start a wing." Herod of old was a mighty man, and he left the women of Israel "nothing but their eyes to weep with." He pursued a policy of "frightfulness," and there was none to oppose him, but just when his crown seemed secure from the infant "King of the Jews" he was slain.

In our time a new Herod has arisen, and throughout Europe there are "lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning." Rachel is weeping for her children, and will not be comforted because they are not. The new tyrant has seen the young babe Liberty, and knows it to be a king. He trembles for his crown, and has resolved that Liberty shall die before it can grow and gather strength. Before he

sent his soldiers against freedom-loving France he had told them that they might some day be called upon to shoot down his enemies in the Fatherland, for he looked upon his Socialist subjects with growing distrust and dismay. Mankind, however, was not made for kings, but kings for mankind, and this is not the Kaiser's world, but God's. God is still the "All Highest," and the nations of the earth are His family. Millions of innocent men, women, and children have already been slain, and the end is not yet. But the little child Liberty is not slain; it is but exiled. As under the guidance of angels Joseph and Mary protected the little prince Jesus, so in the providence of God England and France are delivering the young child Liberty from the craft and cruelty of the king that would destroy it. When the great tyranny is past, Liberty will return to Europe and grow in strength and graciousness. It is a king under whose reign righteousness, and peace, and brotherhood will flourish. Our trust is not in ourselves nor in our carnal weapons, but in

> God the Omnipotent! Mighty Avenger,
> Watching invisible, judging unheard.

If we have not been mistaken about the righteousness of our cause we cannot doubt its tri-

umph. With "heaven-erected face" we can say:

God the All-wise ! by the fire of Thy chastening
  Earth shall to freedom and truth be restored;
Through the thick darkness Thy kingdom is hastening;
  Thou wilt give peace in Thy time, O Lord !

So shall Thy children, in thankful devotion,
  Laud Him who saved them from peril abhorred,
Singing in chorus, from ocean to ocean,
  "Peace to the nations and praise to the Lord."

We must live in communion with the Unseen, and, through the dark months ahead, "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." Those whom we have left behind us on the Somme have not died in vain. They are as the morning star that ushers in the dawn. Their lives have been abridged that the lives of others, in countless numbers, may be enlarged and made glorious. Their unfinished work you have to carry on. Despite hardship and danger,

Workman of God ! O lose not heart,
  But learn what God is like;
And in the darkest battlefield
  Thou shalt know where to strike.

For right is right, since God is God;
  And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
  To falter would be sin.

The little Child who came to us at Christmas has changed all life. He began a new era, and we do not count the years before Him. Each time you put the date on a letter you remind your friends at home that 1,916 years ago Christ gave the world a fresh start, and set in motion the noble influences which have made life, in your estimation, worth dying for. Herod sought to slay the Deliverer while yet a child, and throw the world back into the abyss of darkness. But Herod failed, and died, and when he was dead the angels appeared. Ever since we have greeted Christ's birthday with songs and feasting, for all that is sweet and pure we owe to Him. The day is not far distant when the angel of peace will appear to us in France as one appeared to Joseph in Egypt, and announce that Prussian tyranny is dead, and that the life of an infant Liberty is assured. We may still have doubts about the future, but they will prove as false as Joseph's fears of Herod's son. The part you have played in the triumph will never be forgotten. In all future ages men will speak of your deeds with reverence and gratitude, for they will remember the rights preserved by you, and the noble reforms and tendencies that came to birth and had their childhood during the great War.'

The eyes were gleaming up at me out of the

khaki background—each pair the light of some home over the water. They are not the eyes that looked up at me in June from the daisy-spangled grass; and for many of these also I shall look in vain when a few more months have passed. When that time comes they will be looking on the angels that saved the Child, and on the Child that saved the world.

XXIV

POPPIES AND BARBED WIRE

JUST behind the line where our men fought on July 1 there is a soldiers' cemetery which has become to me a garden of memories. It was a sunny morning when I first saw its white crosses and scarlet poppies. I was on my way to the adjoining village to arrange a service for one of my regiments which had been billeted there for fatigue duties. There was no sign of a cemetery until one got in front of it, for the side view was obstructed. Suddenly rows of little white crosses glinting in the sun startled the sight, and awoke the imagination to scenes of battle and sudden death. The appeal of the crosses was irresistible, and I jumped off my bicycle to look at the names. There were soldiers from many counties lying there, and upon some cross might be a name familiar and loved. Who could tell?

In the far right-hand corner a burial party was at work. I asked what had happened, and they told me. An hour before, the Germans had shelled the village, and four men had been

killed. At breakfast the four lads were happy and bright, eating heartily and laughing merrily. By dinnertime they were wrapped in their blankets and lying silent in death. At teatime they were sleeping in the graves which comrades had dug for them. As I entered the village I saw the deep hole in the road where the shell had burst. There had been no time to fill it in, and I had to wheel my bicycle round it. The Sunday following we had our service on the stretch of grass within the cemetery. It did not seem a melancholy place for worship. Somehow death seems different out here. It looks more natural, for our burials have more of simple faith and less of pagan pageantry. We use no coffin, wear no black, shed no tears, and lay upon the graves no dying flowers. Our brothers fall asleep, we gently wrap them in their blankets, and lay them in their narrow beds. They are in God's keeping. It may be our turn next to 'go west.' But the day's work must be done, and the day's laughter found, ere the Last Post bids us retire for the night. We therefore held our services near our sleeping comrades, and felt no melancholy. We knew how they had died, and why. We did not think of them as dead, but as men who had 'done their bit' and were taking their rest. They were our 'great cloud of witnesses.'

At the close of the Communion Service a soldier asked for a few minutes' conversation. He had not partaken of the bread and wine because he had not made his peace with God. A few days before he had been over the parapet, and amid the danger and tumult of battle had realized how unfit he was to be initiated into the mysteries of death and eternity. As the other lads wandered away we knelt down together on the grass. 'Almighty God,' we prayed, 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against Thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly Thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the *burden of them is intolerable.* Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of Thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Then in the presence of that silent congregation I gave to him the bread and wine.

Other services followed, sometimes on Sundays and sometimes on week-days. One Friday evening I was cycling to our old meeting-place, and marvelling at the beauty of the landscape and its indifference to war. To the right and left stretched countless acres of corn-land. Various kinds of grain had been sown in great patches, and, as there were no hedges or homesteads, the landscape looked like a vast patchwork quilt of Nature's designing. Through the midst of it all, and in front of the cemetery, ran our second line of defence. Millions of yards of barbed wire had been twisted into an impassable network of spikes. If our front line gave way our soldiers were to retire behind the barbed wire, and the enemy, caught and held by the spikes, would be mown down like corn before the reaper, yet who could think of such things there? Shells fell in the distance, and sent up black clouds, but they were little heeded, and women could be seen working, half hidden, among the corn. There were scores of aeroplanes overhead, and two anti-aircraft guns by the road, but the sky was blue and the clouds of purest white. Larks had not ceased to sing. The barbed wire was a mass of green and scarlet, for the grass had grown unchecked all the summer, and innumerable poppies lifted high their heads as though to cover with their

beauty the ugly and threatening spikes. In the cemetery itself poppies were fluttering their crimson wings over every grave. Out of the blue sky, at any moment, might leap the thunderbolt of death, and no soldier moved about without a helmet. Were not the four graves in the corner reminder enough? Yet it was impossible to realize the nearness of war and death. The poppies were too beautiful. They were real, but the War seemed a dream of the night.

Only one of my lads could come to the service. Some were out on fatigue duties, and the rest were going out with the night-digging party. The youth who came was a teacher who had been trained at our Westminster College. He had served in Gallipoli, and belonged to the division known as 'The Incomparable.' To France he had come just in time for the great offensive, and had survived where many had fallen. We passed within the gate, and, kneeling on the soft green grass before the rows of white crosses, I gave to him the sacred bread and wine. It was his first Communion in France. And there, walking among the poppies, we found Him whom Mary in the Garden of the Sepulchre had called 'the Gardener.' We forgot the War and the bitterness of death. 'O death,' we could say, 'where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory?' It was the youth's last Sacrament, though we knew it not then. Now he, too, sleeps with his comrades, but farther south. When the summer comes the poppies will come and cover him, as they cover the lads in the garden where he last drank of the wine of God.

Poppies are the flowers of forgetfulness—the flowers of sleep and pleasant dreamings. And they bloom luxuriantly on the French front.

It is a mistake to suppose that the lads in France are in a state of constant distress and fear. They have times of terror and suffering, but they have also times of laughter and song. There is the barbed wire, but it is often overgrown with poppies. There are, on the whole, no men so cheerful as the men at the Front. They are simply full of laughter and good spirits. Often I hear shouts of laughter, and turn into a billet to see what the joke is. 'Oh, sir,' said one merrily, 'they're laughing at my mouth; they say it is like a suet pudding.' The joke does not need to be a good one to raise laughter, for their hearts are full of merriment, and, like full pails of water, easily overflow. It is their compensation for the hardships and dangers they undergo. Even to the trenches, or to battle, they set off from their billets with

shouting and laughter. Who else have such a right to laugh and be careless? Have they not offered their all—laying it upon the altar? Some at home are troubled at this laughter, and fear their boys do not realize that they may suddenly be swept into eternity. But it is not so. There is hardly a boy ever goes into battle who does not beforehand give his mother's address to a chum. They have seen and heard too much not to meditate seriously on the nearness and meaning of death. Yet they set out to meet it laughing. And why not? Is God so very terrible? He is not some pitiless monster of righteousness! He is a Father! And may not a child rush into a Father's room with shouting and laughter? I think our soldiers' laughter is due to a deeper faith than ours. They know the truth, and the truth has made them free.

Whether we go to God laughing or trembling depends on our conception of God. If He is a slave-driver we shall be beaten with many stripes for every offence; but if He is a Father He will know our frame and remember that we are dust. A father told me some years ago that he had been too stern with his children, and they had become afraid of him and dared not laugh or be themselves in his presence. It was a great sorrow to him. He wanted to be

a father and friend to them, but they could only think of him as a stern judge. Our soldiers do not go to death thinking of God as a Judge, but as a Father. They tell me that as they go over the parapet they 'just trust in God and try to do their bit.' They see the grave, but they also see the poppies of His planting. They feel that God will forget and forgive, like every true father. He may be more than a father, but He cannot be less. This conception of God is the soldiers' wreathing of poppies over the barbed wire of suffering and death.

And is there no poppy of peace to allay the anxiety and heartache of our friends at home? 'I wish,' said a wife to her husband, as he returned to France, 'I wish I could go to sleep, and not wake again until this terrible War is over, and you come back to me.' The barbed wire of war lacerates her heart, and the pain is wellnigh intolerable. Is there no heavenly poppy, no divine opium, for such suffering ones? There is. It is a poppy of Christ's planting. 'I will not leave you comfortless. *I* will come to you. Peace I leave with you, *My* peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' A peace that transcends the understanding is given, and

it cannot be taken away. The soul can say, 'What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee. Nay, more. 'I will trust and not be afraid.' Though Death strikes the loved one in the field, the bereaved soul is still unafraid, both for herself and him. She finds the deeper peace that comes only to those who, at the call of the Highest, have sacrificed what they would like most to have kept. There comes the peace of Christ. Wars are made by men, but the Poppy of Peace is planted by God. The soldiers find it among the barbed wire, and the mourners will find it upon every grave.

XXV

THE ROSE IN THE SKY

A FEW days before Christmas I was walking down a communication-trench just as a heavy bombardment was ceasing. It was near four o'clock, and the sun, a deep red, was almost touching the horizon. A German shell burst some little distance away, high in the air, and formed a black ugly cloud. Slowly the rays of the sinking sun penetrated the cloud of smoke and turned it to a faint pink. As the pink deepened to rose, the cloud expanded under the influence of the soft wind, and within a few moments was transformed into a thing of beauty. It hung poised in mid-air, like a rose unfolding its fragrant petals, over the entrenched army.

The black cloud was of man's making, and revealed his hatred and spite; but its transformation into a thing of beauty and peace was of God's doing, and revealed His love and goodwill as truly as did the rainbow to Noah. God's glorious sun, as it set in blood, turned man's cloud of war into heaven's rose of peace. Like

the sun, God is at once near and afar off. He 'sits upon the circle of the earth,' and gilds our life with His own glory. Our black clouds He turns into roses and our curses into blessings. Man shoots his bolt and wreaks his wrath, and there seems none to hinder; but the last word is God's, and His the last act in our 'strange eventful story.' He is the mother who tidies up after the children have gone to bed. He is the master who touches up his students' pictures. Our black smudges He transforms into summer roses. Only to do good has man unlimited freedom. When he would do evil God is present to restrain and overrule. 'He makes the wrath of man to praise Him; the rest of it He doth restrain.' The War is an evil of man's making, but God will infuse it, has already infused it, with His own goodness. The world will be better after it than before it, as the sky was more beautiful when the shell-cloud had been transformed than it was even before it burst.

The shell-cloud was rosy because the sun was blood-red to a degree it seldom is. On Christmas morning we had a crowded service in a barn behind the line. For our prayers we used the Litany, and for our praises we sang Christmas carols. I had just prayed that we might be delivered from 'battle, murder, and

sudden death,' and was reading the first verse of a carol, when a runner pushed his way through the men and handed me a note from one of my regiments in the trenches. Two of our men had been killed, and I was asked to arrange for their burial. In the afternoon I buried the two lads and two others beside them. A company commander, one of his lieutenants, and a number of men came to pay respect to their memory. As we walked away the captain asked, 'Why does not God stop this fearful slaughter?' I could not answer. Nor could I say why the sun was blood-red as it sank a few days before. But I know the black shell-cloud turned rosy because the sun was red. And I know that the world's liberties are being saved because those four lads are lying in a soldiers' cemetery. If peace were a mechanical or political thing God might step in and stop the War. But 'peace and goodwill towards men' are spiritual things, and must work themselves out in the souls of men.

After the burial I walked down to the trenches, and about six o'clock a heavy bombardment of our line began. With our backs to the side of the trench we listened, in the darkness, to the crash of bursting shells and the whirr of falling fragments. It was a weird Christmas evening, but there was no complaint.

Each knew that if his children were ever to hear the singing of the Christmas angels he must stand there listening to the screaming shells. If ever they were to see the Star of Bethlehem, he must be content for a time with the star-shells that every now and then lit up the ground. None asked for a false peace. Peace is not made by politics but by martyrdom. The lads killed in the trenches have died for more than the homeland. They have died for all generations and all lands. Their sun set early, and set in blood, but as they 'went west' the light of their free spirits transformed the cloud of tyranny into a rose of freedom. From their parents and wives the rose may be hidden by the black night of weeping; but when the morrow dawns the children will look into a sky without a cloud. As under the rainbow seed-time and harvest cannot fail, so under the flag of freedom 'peace and goodwill' shall know no end. Never again will such a flood of lust and tyranny overwhelm mankind. Our children shall play 'under their own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make them afraid.' And, as it is in England and in France, so it shall be in all lands, for our soldiers have bought liberty for all.

3 *Printed in the United States of America*